Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia

The Case of the Ethnic Chinese

Edited by
Leo Suryadinata

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ETHNIC RELATIONS AND NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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Preface

Ethnic/racial relations have been a perennial theme in Southeast Asian studies, and current events have highlighted the tensions among ethnic groups and the need to maintain ethnic/racial harmony for nation unity. The Singapore Society of Asian Studies (SSAS) organized an international conference at the end of November 2002 focusing on an analysis of ethnic/race relations in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, with special reference to the roles of ethnic Chinese in nation-building. It brought together a group of established Southeast Asian scholars to critically examine some of the important issues such as ethnic politics, nation-building, state policies, and conflict resolution.

The plan of the SSAS Conference Committee was to have the issues analysed from various perspectives. It therefore invited scholars of different ethnic origins, so that each could present the perspective from his own ethnic background. The arrangement does not imply that scholars cannot offer an accurate analysis of those outside their own ethnic group. Rather, the conference was to provide an opportunity for the scholars to deal with different facets of the issues involved as experienced or witnessed in their lives. Based on this objective, the committee invited nine scholars from three countries.

From Indonesia, the Committee invited Dr Mely Tan, a senior sociologist, to deal with the issue of Chinese ethnicity and nation-building; A. Dahana, an indigenous historian, to see the problem from a *pribumi* perspective; and Frans Winarta, a *peranakan* lawyer and an activist, to look at the legal aspect of the problem.

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From Malaysia, the Committee invited Dr Lee Kam Hing, a historian who has done a lot of work on Chinese Malaysians to deal with nation-building from the perspective of a Chinese Malaysian; P. Ramasamy, a political scientist of Indian descent, to deal with Indian Malaysians; and Shamsul A.B., a prolific Malay anthropologist, to give a Malay's perspective of the ethnic Chinese.

From Singapore, three scholars were invited. Eugene Tan, a young scholar trained in both law and political science, recounted the experience of nation-building in the island state; and Tan Ern Ser, a sociologist, presented a paper discussing current ethnic relations in Singapore based on survey data; while Sharon Siddique, also a sociologist, commented on Chinese Singaporeans from an outsider's point of view.

The Committee also invited Professor Wang Gungwu, a leading authority on the history of Chinese overseas and a historian of China and Southeast Asia, to address the general issue on ethnic Chinese and nation-building in Southeast Asia, thus providing a crucial framework for the conference.

These ten interesting and most up-to-date articles were later revised to become this volume. I have not only edited this volume but also provided the concluding remarks to draw the various views together.

Leo Suryadinata
30 May 2003

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CHAPTER 1

Chinese Ethnicity in New Southeast Asian Nations

WANG GUNGWU

This topic is one that has been important for me all my life. The longer I live in this region, the more important this topic seems to be. In my experience, two of the most difficult words to understand are words such as "ethnic" and/or "race relations", on the one hand, and "nation-building", on the other. The important difference between the two is that ethnic and racial relations have been with us since the beginning of human history while nation-building is new. The concept of ethnicity, the evolution of culture and our self-awareness, the kinds of changes that enable different groups of people to communicate, live, and deal with one another in war or in peace, has a very long history. Nation-building, however, is a more specific phenomenon that has arisen in more recent times. Of course, there are many ways of defining the word "nation" and, in some older usages, it is difficult to distinguish "nation" from ethnicity and even race. But if we do not try to draw distinctions between them, we are really hard put to explain what building a nation could mean or even envisage how this is possible. Clearly, to avoid misunderstanding we must try to use these words correctly and consistently.

I cannot promise to clarify these concepts for everyone, but I will

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say what I mean when I use the terms. I take the long view about culture being one of the key components of ethnicity. I shall not use the word "race" because I prefer to reserve the word for occasions when there is a need to stress physical differences.[1] It is, of course, possible to include the word "race" as another component in ethnicity, but that is not always the most important consideration. For me, ethnicity would normally be centred on culture, on the core of ethnic self-consciousness that manifests itself in the awareness of one's own cultural roots.[2] This is something ongoing and has been with us ever since human beings became aware of their cultural roots and began to think about the significance of having such roots.

The idea of "nation" in the specific context of the nation-states that we are encouraged to build and defend is something very new. It is different from the legal entity, the state, in that a nation that did not observe state boundaries would consist of people who lived in different states, and states could function and were recognized as such even if they included people who saw themselves as belonging to different nations. The bringing together of the two words "nations" and "states" as "nation-states" in a systematic way for all countries in the world only began in the twentieth century with the establishment of the League of Nations. Today the usage has the support of all the members of the United Nations. They may each consider themselves a nation-state in a distinctive way. The states are at different stages of nation-building. Some claim that their people are their nationals in the fullest sense while others admit that while their states consist of many "nations", they are in fact fully integrated. But all agree that they have one important feature in common: all are committed to behaving internationally as if they were all nation-states.

The nation-state is based on the modern phenomenon that first emerged in Western Europe about two hundred years ago.[3] In its ideal form, it was defined to mean that every state should consist of people who believed that they belonged to a single nation. Such a nation of a united people would be the foundation of the state. Or, if a state already existed, then the people who saw themselves as being a nation would seek to determine the proper borders of that state. The coming together of the words "nation" and "state" became the model for new states that

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set out to build their nations and also for some putative "nations" to seek to establish their own states.[4] The model also outlines the parameters of such nation-states and makes it easier for us to understand the idea of nation-building and the limits of the concept of nation-state.

Thus the two concepts of ethnicity and nation-state are obviously different.[5] One is a long-standing, historical, evolutionary concept that all humans have experienced. Each ethnic group has its own culture, or a sense of cultural identification. The other is a modern phenomenon that describes something that has been constructed over time and can be built afresh.[6] It can be shaped and controlled by institutions such as the bureaucracy and political and legal systems and, if properly structured, may be recognized in international law as a member of the United Nations organization.

With that as background, the three countries of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia face the same question. How should each build its nation in the context of a world of nation-states? Nation-building immediately assumes two things. One is that the three countries are not yet nations, and therefore the need for nation-building. Secondly, it assumes that "nation-state" is something that you can actually build. There is a way of building it, like constructing a house or laying a road or starting a work of engineering. This assumes that we already know exactly what we are trying to build. The original nation-states evolved in Europe among people who had lived together for a long time and shared a lot together. Most notably, they had shared their language, a single religion, a sense of common history, in short, a single dominant culture. They consisted in the main of people of a single physical stock. Over time, they also created the modern institution of the state, and combined this oneness of identity with the structure of the state. Thus occurred a marriage of cultural similarity and self-consciousness with the borders and institutions of the modern state.

For the earliest examples of such states in Western Europe, notably those of Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal, there was really no such thing as nation-building. They came to see themselves by the end of the eighteenth century as self-conscious nations. Their success in projecting themselves as better organized, coherent, united, and effective states that brought new standards of prosperity and confidence to their nationals

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made them the model for all others who aspired to the same standards of achievement. Thereafter, those new nations that were created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even in Western Europe itself, had to go through a process of nation-building. Compared with countries in our region, these new states were nation-building with more manageable material. On the whole, people simply remained roughly where they were and new borders were drawn, and people were asked to identify with that state through a common language, religion, and historical experience, and asked to show how much they would like to make themselves a nation. Building the nation was not so much an externally induced act of construction, but more one of self-construction, self-identification by people who had already experienced much together and who wanted to become or belong to the new nation-state. This may seem an over-simplification, but it can be said that in Western Europe, many new nations were formed by following a particular formula drawn from clear models. This is not to say that wars were not fought in the attempt to gain land for some states.

In Asia, we know that some of our nation-states are more artificial.[7] This is true not only of Asia, but also in Africa and other places as well, places that had come out of recent imperial and colonial experiences during which borders were drawn by outside interests. These external factors have created conditions that have made the borders meaningless for some people and meaningful for others, but all are bound by the concept of strict national borders. Once there was the concept of borders, then you have, as scholars like Benedict Anderson have suggested, imagined national communities, or people seeking to re-imagine themselves as a nation within borders already drawn.[8] The drawing of the borders may not have been done with the interests of the people concerned in mind. These people, on the whole, had to take it as given that the borders are thus inviolate.

With decolonization, the process of nation-building within these given borders began. The models were those of Western Europe in the context of modernization, nation-states that had proved during the last two hundred years to have been the most successful political institutions the world had ever seen. Before that, the confusion and lack of precision about borders, or the lack of the concept of sovereign states, had led to

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continuous disputes that were only settled by displays of might. The new nation-states, however, are backed by laws that regulate international behaviour. Experience had led the nation-states to establish international institutions to supervise the behaviour of states. These institutions are expected to enable nation-states to live in peace with one another as much as possible, and ultimately make for a more peaceful world. The high ideals underlying these developments were formulated by the Western Europeans after centuries of bitter fighting among themselves, centuries during which some had virtually self-destructed. But having learnt their lesson, they set about to create a larger framework in which more peaceful ways could be found for all nation-states to live and work with one another. The new nation-states in Asia sought independence by driving out the colonial powers and have embraced the nation-state as something good for everyone.

Nevertheless, this is an ongoing process for everyone. Even in Europe some of the nation-states are very new. Some of the national boundaries, following the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia,[9] have only recently been changed with very serious consequences. Even the Europeans are still struggling with questions as to who belongs to which nation and what in the end is the ideal form of the nation-state. So we must recognize that the form nation-states take is by no means straightforward. Nevertheless, there is a historical model that is derived from the western part of the European continent that the rest of the world has looked to for guidance. Whether we like it or not, the majority of the countries in Asia are committed to that model, if only as one of the measures to help us achieve international peace and harmony. That has become the basic framework for the development of states in this part of the world.

Let me now turn to the three countries, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. They all face problems as to how to deal with their respective nation-building tasks. This book focuses on the case of the ethnic Chinese in each of them. And indeed this is particularly difficult, not least because most Chinese have inherited a deep-rooted, demanding, and distinctive culture.

Most of the people in the three countries have traditions and cultures of which they are proud. Most of them would like to preserve as much

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of their culture as possible. At the same time, we also know that cultures can change and that nothing is static. Most people want the right to decide what they want, and they have to make hard choices from time to time. They can decide what part of their culture they want to preserve and what they would fight to preserve. Beyond that, they may be willing to give up bits of their culture as being no longer relevant or useful to their lives. They would then be willing to accept new ideas, institutions, and value systems that would make their lives more meaningful. All human beings are capable of doing that and in fact do that all the time. They often do so naturally, not self-consciously, but may also do so quite deliberately if they have to. Sometimes, they do that because of the very persuasive methods that are used to make people adapt to different circumstances.

I take it as given that the three countries are committed and will continue to be committed to the process of nation-building. They thus accept all the difficulties that flow from it. What is immediately obvious is that the nation-building tasks of these three countries are also very different. The conditions they started out with are different; the historical experiences are vastly different. Of course, it is possible for us to find similarities and try to ignore the differences. But, if we study the countries carefully and objectively, they offer three examples of nation-building that are more different than they are similar. That is a fact that we have to accept.

Where the ethnic Chinese are concerned, those of us who have lived through the last few decades will be familiar with how difficult the problem of nation-building has been for them. To understand that, we would need to go back to the questions of culture and nation. I had begun by suggesting that most people have difficulties moving from a culture-based way of organizing communities, that is, grouping people according to inherited cultures, to a state-based way of doing so, where the state sets out to make nations out of diverse peoples. The two are quite distinct. Therefore, for people to change from one way to the other requires, if not time, certainly a shift in mental processes to allow them to adapt and adjust to the new conditions. I do not know whether the Chinese are more committed to a culture-based background than other people. It is very hard to evaluate that. But it is possible to say that

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the Chinese have been very much a people historically rooted in their multi-layered cultures, something they have recognized as their civilization. They have always talked in terms of cultural identification rather than of identification with any state.

In fact, the concept of a state itself is a very modern one, and may be said not to have existed in Chinese history. What most Chinese identified with was the culture of their own local region, and this provided them with a strong link with the culture of a unified and larger community under the Son of Heaven. The culture had no territorial boundaries but the extended identification tied them to the civilization of the Han people that was based on various religions and philosophies, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and others, integrated by their élites into the Great Tradition. As for the Little Traditions of their local communities, these knit them closely to their own dialect groups, clan associations, kinship structures, and local temple communities.

But a nation-state defines all these commitments and loyalties differently. Indeed, for most people, moving from a cultural identification to a national identification is easier said than done. Whether you make the move over time, or do so by having certain ways of doing things institutionalized in such a way that forced people to accept a new political form, would vary from one country to another. The historical experiences we have seen in Europe show that it is entirely possible to take some models and apply them directly to the three countries that we are talking about today. But we have to recognize that this is a process of change from a culture-based people to a nation-state based people. Among individuals, of course, the change can be made but a whole community cannot make such changes easily. All communities have their own characteristics, their sources of authority, and the associations to which people are committed and are loyal. These do not change overnight. They require time and that can be very painful if the conditions are unfavourable. It could also be a very smooth process if communities with different cultural heritages share that painful experience with understanding and compassion, and sympathize with each other's difficulties. Under certain conditions, they could reach a state of nationhood or build their nation-states together in harmony.

But the function of a modern state, so different from the state in the

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past, has to be taken into account. The modern state is a very intrusive institution. It is also expected to be a very responsible institution. If we compare it with the earlier polities before the nineteenth century, we will find that the early states were extremely selfish institutions (there are still many examples of such states today) dominated by a person or a family, or a small group of oligarchs or élitist bureaucrats, or military men as praetorian guards. They remind us that states have rarely done anything for people directly in the past. But today people expect the state to be responsible for its citizens. It should be responsive because it is supposed to serve its citizenry.

The intrusive modern state demands that we rethink our responsibilities and our differences. The demands have not always been understood and have thus led to many of the difficulties that the new states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have experienced over the last few decades.[10] Until the beginning of the twentieth century, most Chinese people did not feel any attachment to any particular state. They had an emperor, they had certain communal commonalities which they brought from China to various parts of Southeast Asia, and they tried to maintain their traditional values and lifestyles as much as possible. They were prepared to make modifications and changes in their lives and adapt to local conditions where necessary.[11] But, on the whole, they stayed loyal to their families in their home villages and towns and to the religious practices they brought from China. That had been the tradition.

Then came changes that began with the twentieth century, notably those that emerged with the new kind of post-colonial nation-state. This has been a confusing experience, with leaders like Sun Yat-sen, Liang Qichao, and their followers not being able to capture precisely what was meant by the concept of nation.[12] In fact, the concept of *minzu* 民族 and that of *minzu zhuyi* 民族主义 have not been helpful and have led to considerable difficulty among the Chinese people themselves. Nevertheless, it was the start of an inevitable process. It was a demand for the Chinese people to make a commitment to something more than simply cultural heritage, for them to make a commitment to the modern concept of a *guojia* (nation). This called for an interruption in how the Chinese saw themselves, if not a dislocation from their earlier traditions. It was expected that more and more Chinese in the region would make

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that commitment to China, not China as a dynastic family affair, under the old rubric of *jiatianxia* 家天下, but China as a modern country, with sovereign borders, with the notion of citizenship or nationality and all the accoutrements of other modern states comparable to the powerful imperialist powers dominating this part of the world. Thus most Chinese in the region began to reorient themselves to this new nation-state, the *Zhonghua minguo* (Republic of China).

The difficulty was that for most Chinese in Southeast Asia, the process of learning about this nation-state was very indirect. The people of the three countries were all outside China; they had different "political" loyalties, either to the colonial powers who administered the areas they worked in, or to local indigenous rulers of one kind or the other whose right to rule they had learnt to recognize. In that context, the concept of a nation-state somewhere else, that is, in China, was rather abstract, even though the idea of China being bullied by foreign powers and of Chinese people being discriminated against by European officials could still be emotionally powerful. It is interesting how many Chinese in the colonies did not readily accept the idea of a meaningful Chinese nation-state, but continued to recognize the local authority of the colonial government.

In Malaya and the East Indies, the two local authorities were the British and the Dutch. Even the formulation of what a nation-state should be like was taken from the Dutch and British models, which were incidentally two of the oldest in Europe. The Dutch were very early in establishing their sense of national identity by fighting for their independence against the Spanish. And the British, because their island was separated from the European continent and they had long defended their territory from continental enemies, had also developed their national identity early. Thus the Chinese sojourners in their colonies were dealing with two countries that already had a strong sense of their own national identity.

But for most of the sojourners themselves, the ideal of nation was much more difficult to imagine. It was therefore not surprising that the Chinese were divided about who they should pledge loyalty to. How could they be loyal to either the British or Dutch nation, since neither would accept the Chinese as their nationals? They were not members of

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any nation-state that could be directly concerned with their daily lives, something that they could identify with that had clear national symbols and national leaders that they could look up to.[13] On the other hand, their awareness of a new China could be dramatized in many ways and indeed patriotism for China was dramatized so that even sojourners far away from China were emotionally aroused.[14] The idea of a Chinese nation emerging from a period of being bullied and humiliated but now with the prospect of being saved from destruction and having its civilization revived was welcomed. But, for the earlier settled Chinese who had never lived in China, and for the majority of the sojourners who now live outside of China, it is still unclear what a Chinese nation-state would be like. This was the period before World War II, before the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia had developed any clear concept of a Chinese nation-state, but were nevertheless inspired by the thought of what a new China could do for them.

It was followed by the process of de-colonization and the emergence of new nation-states in the region. This process alone has taken over twenty years, from the 1940s to the 1960s. While it was going on, all peoples in these territories were encouraged to use their imagination to think about what the task of nation-building would be like. Nobody was sure how that would proceed, but it was quite clear that whoever held power would shape and mould the future of the nation-state. It was primarily a matter of who inherited the state that the colonial powers had established during the years prior to independence. That modern colonial state would be taken over by new groups of local modern people who had their own ideas about how nation-states should be built. They would remove the colonial officials, replace them with their own supporters, take on their new responsibilities and begin the work of building the state afresh.

Ideally, if people had a chance to play a role in that process, most would readily accept what eventually emerged. It was not a coincidence that when nation-states first emerged in Western Europe, they were associated with a democratic process at the same time. It was not always straightforward, but national awareness often coincided with a people's self-conscious desire to have a say in what its government does and who should represent them in it.

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When I was a student, I was very impressed by Seymour Lipset's book, which describes America as "the first new nation".[15] In some respects, this was a correct interpretation of America's early history. It was the first time that people had consciously set out to build a nation out of the colonies that had fought for independence together. After their victory, the leaders of the revolt had to build their nation. One after another, these leaders of the American Revolution listed all the things that a nation should have, and drew up blueprints like those that engineers and architects use to construct buildings and roads. When Lipset's book came out, I was struck by the contrast between how earlier nations had evolved and what the United States had actually built. Perhaps the United States model was more appropriate than the European ones for this part of the world.

The first thirty years of the history of the United States after their war of independence is certainly worth reading for people who are trying to build a nation-state. The process did not begin as one that was fair to everybody. As has often been pointed out, at the time of independence, large sections of the population were slaves. On the other hand, the British colonists who led the rebellion came mainly from one cultural background, and more or less shared a single religion. Some of them did have slightly different languages, but only one dominant language was recognized as the national language, and this was to be the only one for the new country.[16] Thus the ingredients that went into the new state were all helpful to the process of building the nation.

They were certainly much more helpful than the ingredients that were present when Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore first set out to build their nations.[17] We all know how complex the religious, linguistic, and cultural mix was for the three countries. For the ethnic Chinese, including many who had lived in the countries for generations, they had to face the prospect of transforming their culture-based community into one that had to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the respective nation-states. This was a very different process of adjustment from that experienced by most of the people of Europe. The process represented a major change in direction that asked the ethnic Chinese to accept a totally new political framework. It is to be expected that most of them would need time to understand what it meant to change

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from a culture-based people to a nation-building people. And this was especially bewildering when the concept of nation itself was still weakly conceived in all three countries.

We now recognize more clearly than ever that the process is an intricate and difficult one, and that it calls for great effort of imagination on the part of the different peoples living in the countries. As I mentioned earlier, this was not so much of a problem for the individual. Each person could make a choice and simply decide one way or other. It could even be a more dramatic act, something like a conversion, and a deeply felt change of loyalty. But for the larger Chinese community, involving hundreds of thousands if not millions of people, such a change would not be so easy.

This process has been made even more complicated by yet another stage of modernization, one that is leading the world to what is now called globalization. This is another kind of interruption. It is an interruption because, as the Chinese are taking steps to change towards a nation-based identity, they are now invited to adjust to yet further changes that place an emphasis on global relationships. In short, while the ethnic Chinese are in the process of accepting new ideas of nationality, they are also being asked to look beyond national borders and even return to cultural identifications. They are under pressure to respond to different and possibly contradictory challenges. These challenges of globalization are particularly complicated. We can have at least three ways of looking at globalization and each shows how the ongoing process of nation-building today is facing different processes of change. Let me identify the three kinds of globalization.[18]

There is neo-globalization. I called it that because the world has been gradually globalizing for many centuries. What is new is that the process now involves more people, and it is more extensive. Also, communication around the world is much faster and therefore the pressures on change are greater. This has taken the form of a dominant market economy acting on all our lives. It has become a kind of informal economic empire, with multinational corporations linked together by forces beyond the control of anybody and even of any state by itself. This neo-globalization is very powerful and something new to us, and we still have to learn how to cope with it. It certainly has the potential to

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create a kind of multinational, economic empire. And that is why there is growing opposition to it either because of ideology or because of fear.

At another level, some national polities are able to make globalization serve their own interests. These countries do so because they are economically strong enough and confident that they have the strategies to deal with the forces unleashed by globalization. They would have to be powerful nations that can limit and control these forces, they must know how to fight for their interests, while also knowing how to co-operate among themselves so that this neo-globalization can be made to serve those interests. At this level, national politics would have to be united in purpose, mature, and sophisticated, and capable of acting with other like-minded polities to determine the way this globalization serves them.

At the third level, there is the local level of ethnic groups, minority groups, who try to take advantage of the transnational aspects of globalization and use them to defend their minority or ethnic interests in the larger nation-states that they belong to. The local ethnic transnational groups do this through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many kinds of associations are then linked together and formed into international networks to enable the groups to transcend their problems within their country. At this level, local responses to globalization become part of the tactics of survival, of dealing with discrimination or injustices that minority ethnic groups feel about their position within the nation-building process.

Thus globalization is not all positive or negative, and there can be different responses to this phenomenon. It is relevant here because it is taking place in our region at the same time as nation-building. When the work of building nations is still going on, or in some cases have barely begun, there is simultaneously the temptation and pressure to transcend national boundaries and act beyond the narrower interests of the nation-state. One may well ask, how are people to concentrate on nation-building while all this is going on? Are these contrary forces working against the nation-building process, making it all the harder to produce a smooth and peaceful transition to nationhood? Will it not aggravate some of the difficulties that the nations are already experiencing while they are still in the midst of building?

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For the ethnic Chinese, this may be a temptation for them to slow down their commitment to nation-building. I am not suggesting that it is happening. But because globalization beyond the narrow confines of national boundaries provides new escape hatches, a mechanism is being provided that can allow them to avoid those parts of nation-building that they do not like. So those who are not committed, or particularly loyal, to the kind of nation-building process that is prevalent, could be easily tempted by these new forces to resist nation-building itself.[19] This may not yet be consciously acted on, but we cannot rule it out as a force that would make nation-building an even more complicated process than it already is.

Let me end with an analogy, albeit not an exact one. Nation-building may be likened to a marriage, which is supposed to be a life-long commitment. Traditionally, marriage certainly was such a commitment. The relationship had to be worked at to ensure that the marriage survived. But with modernization, there are so many temptations. It is now so much easier to get a divorce. Globalization can be said to have a similar impact in that it makes nation-building more complicated. There is no simple way to build a nation and there is no way to guarantee that there will be a perfect nation. It is not yet clear how the ethnic Chinese in the three countries will respond if more global and transnational opportunities become open to them. These may demand career or professional choices, or they could be linked with the pull of Chinese culture and ethnicity now that China is committed to joining the modern world. While these temptations may interrupt their commitment to nation-building, let us hope that not too many will give up too easily and abandon marriage and turn to divorce as a solution.

NOTES

1. Sociologist Richard Burkey, for instance, argues that "Race is essentially defined by biological characteristics; Ethnic group is defined in terms of behavior, culture and language, in addition to an occasional reliance upon phenotype …" (Burkey 1978, p. 19).
2. I am aware that there is no general agreement on the definition of ethnicity (or "ethnic group"). Max Weber, for instance, defined an ethnic group in terms of "a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or

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of customs or both" (Hutchinson and Smith 1996, p. 35). R.A. Schermerhorn also argues that it is "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of the peoplehood" (Schermerhorn 1970, p. 12). Both scholars stress the elements of "assumed common ancestry" as well as common culture, but I prefer to stress the common culture aspect.

3. For an earlier study of European nations and nationalism, see Kohn (1944). More recent books have been written on the making of nations such as British nation/Britons and French nation. See, for instance, Colley (1992) on the rise of the British nation and Bell (2001) on the French nation. Strictly speaking, with the recent migrations, both the United Kingdom and France are facing the problem of nation-building again, Nevertheless, the problem is different from that of Southeast Asia where there was no established "nation" to begin with.
4. For a brief and useful discussion on nation, state, and nation-state in the last century, see Guibernau (1996).
5. Some scholars differentiate nation, state, and ethnic group, but many tend to use them interchangeably, resulting in confusion. See Walker Connor, "A Nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a …" in Connor (1994, pp. 90–117).
6. In fact, there are two types of nation; one is ethnic nation, which is based on one ethnic group, the other is social nation (civic nation), which is based on multi-ethnic groups. See Kellas (1991, pp. 2–3).
7. For early studies on the rise of nation-states in Asia (and Africa), see Emerson (1960) and Kedourie (1971).
8. Anderson (1983).
9. On the ethnic situation in the former Soviet Union, see Smith (1996); with regard to Yugoslavia, see Cohen (1993); and on the question of nationalism in Europe after the breakup of the Soviet Union, see Kupchan (1995).
10. There are very few book-length studies in English dealing with nation-building in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Below are some of the titles. Regarding Indonesia, see Kahin (1960), Bachtiar (1972, 1974), Suryadinata (1998), especially chapters 3 and 4. On Singapore, see Chan Heng Chee (1971), Hill and Lien (1995). Regarding Malaysia, see Ongkili (1985), Shamsul (1996), *The Bonding of a Nation* (1985), Cheah (2002).
11. I have discussed the phenomenon in my earlier works, for instance, "The Origins of the Term Hua-Ch'iao" (1976), republished in Wang (1981); "Chinese Politics in Malaya" (1970), also republished in Wang (1981); "Sojourning: The Chinese Experience" (1996), republished in Wang (2001, pp. 54–72); and "Chineseness: The Dilemma of Place and Practice", republished in Wang (2002, pp. 182–99).
12. See Levenson (1953) and Huang (1972) regarding Liang Ch'i-ch'ao. See Sun Yat-

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sen (1927), Schiffrin (1968), and Wang (1959), republished in Wang (1981) with regard to Sun Yat-sen.

13. Both British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies did not encourage nation-building. On the contrary, both colonial powers perpetuated the concepts of indigenism and race, arguing that ethnic Chinese was a separate race from the so-called indigenous population. See, for instance, Wertheim (1959), Suryadinata (1994), and Coppel (2002) on Indonesia; on Malaysia, see Purcell (1948).
14. Wang (2002).
15. Lipset (1963).
16. For a brief discussion of the nation-building process in the United States, see Gleason (1982).
17. While using the American model, I am aware that only Singapore is an "immigrant state" while both Indonesia and Malaysia are "indigenous states". This poses more problems in nation-building in these two countries. See Siddique and Suryadinata (1981–82), Lau (1990), Suryadinata (1997).
18. Like ethnicity and nation, there is no general agreement on globalization. The most widely cited definition was the one by Anthony Giddens: "the intensification of world-wide relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice-versa" (Giddens 1990, p. 64). However, I use the term to mean a stage of modernization that involves the whole world.
19. There are not many studies regarding the challenge of globalization to the Chinese overseas. I have briefly discussed the issue in my paper "Migration and New National Identities" (1998), republished in Wang (2001), also my other article (June 2002). Suryadinata (2002) also discusses this issue with special reference to Indonesian Chinese.

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CHAPTER 2

Unity in Diversity: Ethnic Chinese and Nation-Building in Indonesia

MELY G. TAN

When discussing the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia today, there is a tendency to differentiate between the period before and after the massive riots of 13–15 May 1998, which occurred primarily in Jakarta and Solo and in a number of other Indonesian cities.[1] As a matter of fact this periodization holds for the country as a whole, as one of the major consequences of this incident was the forced resignation of Soeharto on 21 May 1998.

For the ethnic Chinese, May 1998 was another, or perhaps the most recent, watershed, in that it marked the beginning of a basic change in their attitude and behaviour, especially in the socio-political arena. In the earlier period from the beginning of the Republic, the periodization of the history of the ethnic Chinese can be subdivided into the Soekarno regime, the Soeharto regime, followed by the current period of *Reformasi*.

This chapter focuses on four key concepts: unity, diversity, nation-building, and the ethnic Chinese.

All four concepts are very pertinent at this stage of Indonesia's

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development, when the very existence of Indonesia as a nation-state is being threatened. The concept of unity, expressed in Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI) (the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) has to be reviewed in the face of the turmoil of secessionist armed conflict, and of inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife that has torn apart the fabric of society, since the last ten years or so of the Soeharto government and accelerating after his demise as president. Demands and threats of secession are rife in Aceh, Irian Jaya/Papua, and the Riau Islands. Mainly to head off this development, the government, then under Habibie, enacted Law No. 22 and No. 25 of 1999 on regional autonomy, and implemented them on 1 January 2001.

Much has been written and numerous seminars and discussions have been held on the regional autonomy and its implementation, most with an undertone or with an overtone of scepticism and concern as to the readiness of the region as well as the central government's ability to implement this regional autonomy successfully in the sense of having the expected beneficial impact on the people involved. Ben Mboi, a former governor of West Timor who has become an astute scholar of the history and the present situation of the Indonesian system of government, stated (in a personal communication) that while there is generally a "phobia" against federalism dating back to the short-lived (December 1949 to August 1950) Republik Indonesia Serikat (Feith and Castles 1970, p. 498),[2] in fact, the substance of these two laws and their implementation show a federalist approach.

Diversity is a concept embedded in the motto of Indonesia: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or Unity in Diversity. This diversity is expressed in the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society: there are about 300 ethnic groups that are considered "indigenous". There are also about the same number of languages. In addition, there are four ethnic groups of foreign descent, comprising people of Chinese, Dutch, Arab, and Indian origins. The five world religions (Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Buddhism, Hinduism) are represented. Moreover, there are about four hundred indigenous belief systems, usually referred to as *Kepercayaan kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (Belief in God the Almighty). There are three variations of the kinship system (matrilineal, partrilineal, parental); three variations of the legal system: national, religious (Islam), *adat* (customary) law; two types of

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marriage systems: monogamy, and polygamy for those whose religion (in this case, Islam) provides for this.

At the same time Indonesian society has "dualistic" characteristics. The majority of the people are rural-based, while a minority resides in urban areas. By far the majority has had formal schooling no higher than primary school level. The majority also belongs to the category that live below the poverty level. Only a small minority can participate in the high-technology, capital-intensive sector of the economy.

The pluralist characteristics in society have generated social relations between the various groups characterized by minority-majority relations, while the "dualistic" characteristics have resulted in a dichotomy situation characterized by potentially explosive inequality/asymmetric relations and relations that are perceived as fraught with injustice. This is especially true in the relationship with the ethnic Chinese, but more recently in inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations between the various so-called indigenous groups in general as well.

Nation-building is a concept that was the preoccupation or more appropriately, obsession, of Soekarno, the first president of the Republic. A clear exposé of his views can be read in his "Nationalism, Islam and Marxism", one of his first major pieces of writing, published in the Bandung paper *Indonesia Muda* as early as 1926, when he was twenty-five years old. He posed the question:

> Can it happen in a colony that a nationalist movement joins with an Islamic movement which, properly speaking, is not tied to any one nation, and with a Marxist movement, which is engaged in an international struggle? Can Islam, a religion, work together in facing the colonial authorities with Nationalism, which attaches prime importance to the nation, and with Marxism, which is based on teachings of materialism? … We say with firm conviction: "Yes, it can be done". (Feith and Castles 1970, p. 357)

Soekarno's concept of nation and nation-building is most comprehensively explained in his speech "The Birth of Pantja Sila", delivered on 1 June 1945 before the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan* (BPUPK) or BPUPKI (the I stands for Indonesia), the Investigative Committee for the Preparation of Independence. From the substance of this speech, we can read that he was deeply concerned with the proposal for an Islamic state (Feith and Castles 1970, p. 40).

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After quoting Ernest Renan and Otto Bauer on the concept of nation (Feith and Castles 1970, pp. 40–42), he stated forcefully:

> … the Indonesian Nation is the totality of all the human beings who, according to geopolitics ordained by God Almighty, live throughout the unity of the entire Indonesian archipelago from the northern tip of Sumatra to Irian. All of them, throughout the islands! Because amongst these 70 million human beings *le desire d'etre ensemble* already exists; there is already *Charaktergemeinschaft*. The Indonesian nation, the Indonesian people, the people of Indonesia total 70 million persons, but seventy million people who have already become one, one, once again one! (Feith and Castles 1970, p. 42)

When explicating on the Pancasila, he said the five principles can be compressed into one genuinely Indonesian term, that is, *gotong royong* or mutual co-operation, hence Indonesia is a *gotong royong* state: "The principle of *gotong royong* between the rich and the poor, between the Muslim and the Christian, between Indonesians and those of foreign descent who became Indonesians" (Feith and Castles 1970, p. 49). We will note that the incumbent President Megawati Soekarnoputri has chosen to name her cabinet the Gotong Royong Cabinet.

This chapter focuses on the ethnic Chinese and their participation and representation in the process of nation-building of Indonesia. This process is a topic that is part of the continuing discourse on nation, nation-building, democracy, and unity, that has preoccupied the intellectuals in Indonesia from the beginning of the nationalist movement until today. It is annually highlighted around 28 October, the day the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge) proclaimed on 28 October 1928 is commemorated.

After this brief introduction, I will continue with the section on "The Participation and Representation of the Ethnic Chinese in Nation-Building", followed by the section entitled "The Road Ahead", where I will discuss the prospects of the position of ethnic Chinese in what a number of presidential hopefuls refer to as *Indonesia Baru*.

The Participation and Representation of the Ethnic Chinese in Nation-Building

The end of the repressive government of Soeharto was perceived by the ethnic Chinese as the opportunity to reassert their civic, social, and

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cultural rights as citizens with a specific ethnic identity, entitled to the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens of Indonesia.

The spirit of *reformasi* generated by this change of government, and the high expectations accompanying it, jolted the ethnic Chinese out of their compliance with the now openly recognized discriminative laws and regulations, imposed on them by the Soeharto government.

The realization of the injustice of discrimination and consequent marginalization, in addition to the isolation from mainstream political activities experienced during the thirty-two-year regime of Soeharto, gave the impetus to pull out of this position of submission and compliance. A number of ethnic Chinese then started to look for ways and means to participate in the burgeoning post-Soeharto political activities.

Included in these activities are demands for *meluruskan*, meaning to straighten, to rectify, or to correct mis-representations and non-attribution of the role and contribution of ethnic Chinese in shaping the formation and subsequent development of Indonesia, in history books and in writings on the history of Indonesia. Historians, sociologists, political scientists are today called upon to look into the history, in particular the political history of the ethnic Chinese. For example, on 9 November 2002, the daily *Suara Pembaruan* in co-operation with the INTI (Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa) Jakarta chapter, an organization set up by the ethnic Chinese that functions as a pressure group, conducted a one-day seminar on the theme "Peran Etnis Tionghoa dalam Perjalanan Sejarah Indonesia" (The role of ethnic Chinese in the course of the history of Indonesia).

Interestingly, the keynote speaker was an ethnic Indonesian (Minangkabau) historian from the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) (Indonesian Institute of Sciences, a government research institute), Dr Asvi Warman Adam. In his paper entitled "Etnis Cina Dalam Memori Kolektif Bangsa Indonesia" (Ethnic Chinese in the collective memory of the Indonesian people), he notes that since 2001 the Department of National Education has been trying out a new curriculum, and in the material used at the junior and senior high school level the influence of Hindu-Buddhist, Islam, and European culture is discussed, but no mention is made of Chinese culture. Similarly, the history books used at

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the high school level completely ignore the existence of Chinese culture or prominent people of Chinese origin. He also notes that among the several hundred national heroes the government has elected since 1959 until today, there has not been, as far as he knows, a single person of Chinese origin. He suggests that a person that should be considered is Captain John Lie, who during the revolution, ran the blockade of the Dutch, to smuggle weapons from Singapore for the Republic.

In this connection it should be noted that a book entitled *Peranakan Idealis. Dari Lie Eng Hok sampai Teguh Karya*, which includes the life history of John Lie, was launched on 18 December 2002. This book is edited by Junus Jahja, the ethnic Chinese well known for his view that the conversion of ethnic Chinese to Islam is the way to resolve the "Chinese problem".

Among the other speakers at the seminar were Dr Siauw Tiong Djin, son of Siauw Giok Tjhan, who resides in Australia and visits Indonesia regularly;[3] Mona Lohanda, a historian; Myra Sidharta, who writes on Chinese-Malay literature and on ethnic Chinese women; Benny G. Setiono, chair of the Jakarta chapter of INTI; Stanley Prasetyo, a journalist activist. In addition, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, co-ordinator of the Jaringan Islam Liberal in Jakarta, a well-known young Muslim leader, was to speak on the topic "Hubungan Etnis Tionghoa dan Agama Islam di Pulau Jawa" (Relations between ethnic Chinese and the Muslim Religion in Java), but eventually he was unable to attend. There was a good turn-out, but almost all the participants were ethnic Chinese.

This chapter focuses on the participation and representation of ethnic Chinese in the process of the nation-building of Indonesia. One of the scholars who over the years has devoted a major part of his research and writings on this topic is Leo Suryadinata, a noted historian and political scientist on the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in general. In 1997 a compilation of these writings (written over fifteen years) was published under the title *Chinese and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia* (Singapore Society of Asian Studies). One of his recent publications entitled *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), includes a chapter on the participation in politics of the ethnic Chinese since 1998.

One important aspect of this participation and representation of

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the ethnic Chinese was during the early formation of the Republic, as members of the Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan or BPUPK. As indicated in the documents *Tjamkan Pantja Sila! Pantja Sila Dasar Filsafah Negara* and *Pantja Sila Sepandjang Zaman* (republished by the Departemen Penerangan RI on 1 June 1964 to commemorate the *Lahirnya Pantja Sila*), this committee also has a Japanese name "Dokuritsu Zyunbi Tyoosakai", as it was established in March 1945, when the Japanese occupation forces were still in Indonesia (*Tjamkan Pantja Sila!* 1964 p. 9).[4]

The *Pantja Sila Sepandjang Zaman* (pp. 16, 17) has a list of the names of the members of this committee, among whom were four names that were clearly Chinese: Oey Tiang Tjoei, Oei Tjong Hauw, Liem Koen Hian, and Mr Tan Eng Hoa. The "Mr" (for *Meester in de Rechten*) in front of the name Tan Eng Hoa indicates that he had a law degree from a law school in Holland or in Batavia. There was another Chinese representing this group — Drs Yap Tjwan Bing, who became a member of the Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI, Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence), established in August 1945 (Suryadinata 1995, p. 237).

Oey Tiang Tjoei was a newspaper director in the colonial period and in 1941 he was arrested by the Dutch for his pro-Japanese activities. He was also president of the Hua Ch'iao Tsung-hui (General Association of Overseas Chinese, an organization sponsored by the authorities during the Japanese occupation) (Suryadinata 1995, p. 114). Oei Tjong Hauw was a son of the fourth wife of Oei Tiong Ham, the well-known "sugar baron" of Semarang and founder of the first non-European conglomerate in the then Dutch East Indies, the Oei Tiong Ham Concern. When the father passed away he and another brother took over the business. In 1928 he helped found the Chung Hwa Hui, an organization set up by Dutch-educated *peranakan* Chinese; he was in favour of the ethnic Chinese being nationals of China (Suryadinata 1995, p. 116).[5] Mr Tan Eng Hoa is not included in the book on biographical sketches on ethnic Chinese compiled by Leo Suryadinata.

Of the four, Liem Koen Hian was undoubtedly the most interesting (Leo Suryadinata 1990, pp. 77–110).[6] He was born in Banjarmasin in 1896, the eldest child of a businessman/trader. He was a journalist, who

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became closely related to Indonesian nationalists such as Dr Tjipto Mangunkusumo. Together with a number of other *peranakan* Chinese he founded the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI) in September 1932, which was pro-Indonesian nationalism. In the deliberations of the BPUPK, he was of the opinion that the ethnic Chinese should become Indonesian citizens (unlike Oei Tjong Hauw and apparently also the other Chinese members). In November 1947, he was appointed by the Indonesian government as a member of the delegation to the Renville Conference, an indication of the high regard the Republican government had towards him. However, due to his close relations with Amir Sjarifudin, in August 1951, during a raid of suspected "leftists" he was detained and imprisoned. His health, which was already poor, became worse and in October 1951 he was released. This experience of being imprisoned by "his own people" was a complete shock to him. Eventually he rejected Indonesian citizenship and opted for citizenship of the PRC. As Leo Suryadinata has observed: "Liem Koen Hian was a peranakan who lived in Indonesia in a time of transition. He was searching for his identity and almost found it, but in the end he failed" (Suryadinata 1995, p. 110).

Reflecting the spirit of unity and inclusiveness strongly evident at the time, the BPUPK included an ethnic Arab name: A. Baswedan, and perhaps also Abdul Kadir and one ethnic Dutch P.F. Dahler. Of the names that appeared to be non-Javanese, there were Mr Moh. Yamin, Mr A.A. Maramis, Mr J. Latuharhary, A.M. Dasaad, Parada Harahap. The list also included two women: Mr Maria Ulfah Santoso (one of the first women to get a law degree from Holland) and Mrs RSS Sunarjo Mangunpuspito. This committee had some of the best educated people at the time. There were four who were Professor Dr (the professorship probably received at a later date?): PAH Djajadiningrat, Soepomo, R. Asikin Widjajakusuma, Professor Ir Roosseno. There were fifteen with a law degree (from the law school in Holland or in Batavia at the time), five who were medical doctors, and three who were engineers (Ir).

The story of Liem Koen Hian and the list of members of the BPUPK are indications that in the colonial and in the pre-independence period there were ethnic Chinese, who participated actively in the struggle for nationalism and for independence. There were also those who

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participated in other ethnic Indonesian political organizations. An example was Liem Thay Tjwan (Suryadinata 1995, p. 95), born in Jombang in 1891. He had his early education in Chinese-language schools. After moving to Surabaya, he joined the Indisch Sociaal-democratische Vereeniging (Indies Social-democratic organization) formed in 1914 (which changed its name to Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI in 1920) and later the Sarekat Rakyat (People's Union, a front organization of the PKI in the 1920s). After the communist uprising in 1926, he was arrested by the Dutch and sent to Boven Digul in Nieuw Guinea (since independence changed to Irian Barat and now Papua).

The spirit of inclusiveness shown in the beginning of the Republic continued during the twenty-year period of President Soekarno, who had seven ethnic Chinese ministers in his various cabinets. These were Siauw Giok Tjhan, appointed by then Prime Minister Amir Sjarifudin as Minister for Minority Affairs in 1947; Tan Po Goan, a lawyer, Minister of State in 1949 and in 1953 became a member of the Partai Sosialis Indonesia; Ong Eng Die, who had a Doctor's degree in economics from Holland (in 1943), Deputy Finance Minister in the Amir Sjarifudin cabinet (1947–48), joined the PNI in 1955 and served as Minister of Finance (1955) in the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet; Lie Kiat Teng/ Mohammad Ali, a Muslim and physician and member of the PSII, served as Minister of Health from 1953 to 1955; Haji Mohammad Hassan/ Tan Kim Liong, a Muslim and businessman, appointed member of Parliament (MP) in 1956 representing the Chinese minority and in 1959–64 continued to be an MP, but representing the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Muslim organization, in 1964 made Minister of State Revenue, Finance and Audit; Oei Tjoe Tat, a lawyer, joined Partindo in 1960, Minister of State (1964–65), David G. Cheng, Minister of City Planning and Construction (1965) (Suryadinata 1995).

It should be clear from the above that the ethnic Chinese were politically active during the government of Soekarno. No doubt, the most active, most visible, in mainstream Indonesian politics, and who lasted throughout Soekarno's regime was Siauw Giok Tjhan. In the book written by his son Siauw Tiong Djin, mentioned earlier (see note 3), there is a synopsis of Siauw's career history (pp. xiv, xv, 1–6). He started getting involved in political activities at the age of eighteen in 1932. He

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became a journalist and participated actively in the Indonesian struggle for independence. During the revolution (1945–49) he became a leader in the Socialist Party and was elected a member of the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (Indonesian Central National Committee, formed shortly after independence in 1945) and a member of its Badan Pekerja (Working Committee) in 1947. He was an MP of the short-lived Republik Indonesia Serikat (RIS) in 1949, a member of the Indonesian Parliament from 1950 to 1959, and a member of the Gotong Royong Parliament and of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS) from 1960 to 1965. In addition, he was a member of the Dewan Pertimbangan Agung (DPA) (Supreme Advisory Council) from 1959 to 1965. In other words, Siauw was continuously a member of the highest legislative body practically from the beginning of the Republic until the fall of Soekarno. He was generally known as "Bung Siauw" or "Cak Siauw".

However, since March 1954, with the establishment of the Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia or Baperki (Consultative Body on Indonesian Citizenship), a socio-political organization with the majority of its members ethnic Chinese, Siauw became best known as the leader of the ethnic Chinese. His views on nation-building in relation to the ethnic Chinese, which he espoused since the beginning of his political career was expressed in the idea that the ethnic Chinese as a group should be considered as one of the many ethnic groups in Indonesian society. Therefore, ethnic Chinese as a *suku Tionghoa* (*suku* is Indonesian for "ethnic") should be able to continue nurturing and expressing their Chinese heritage, culture, and traditions. They would thus be an integral part of the Indonesian nation and the term he used for this process is integration. He was outspoken in his views on socialism and believed that only in a socialist Indonesia can the "Chinese problem" be resolved. Siauw was close to Soekarno and adhered to Soekarno's concept of *Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunisme* or *Nasakom*. He was also close to the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), and in the aftermath of the abortive coup of September 1965, Siauw together with many of the other leaders of Baperki were imprisoned and the organization banned.

I will not go further into the political activities of Siauw and Baperki, such as their participation in the general election of 1955, as there are a

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number of comprehensive studies on this topic.[7] Siauw Giok Tjhan himself wrote three manuscripts after his release from prison in September 1975. He was then put under house arrest until 1 May 1978, when he was finally completely freed. The three manuscripts written while under house arrest were "Suatu Renungan", "Lima Zaman", and "For the brighter future" (Siauw T.D. 1999, p. 4). The second manuscript was then published with the title *Lima Zaman: Perwujudan Integrasi Wajar* (Jakarta and Amsterdam: Yayasan Teratai, 1981). In September 1978 he and his wife left for the Netherlands, where he died of a heart attack on 20 November 1981.

Considering the role of Siauw and Baperki during the Soekarno period, his close relations with Soekarno himself and the power élite at the time, in addition to his considerable influence on the ethnic Chinese, it is legitimate to discuss him at some length. We should be reminded however, that Siauw's views were strongly contested from the beginning they were proposed in his writings in newspapers and even more when these views and actions were put forward as the position of Baperki. As a matter of fact, there was grave internal conflict on the eve of the first Parliamentary and Constituent Assembly Election held on 29 September 1955, in which the Baperki participated. This led to the resignation of four prominent members: the first to leave was Tan Po Goan of the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI), followed by Khoe Woen Sioe, also a sympathizer of the PSI, then Injo Beng Goat, editor of the daily *Keng Po*, and Auwyang Peng Koen (later known as P.K. Ojong, founder of *Kompas* daily). The latter two wrote in *Keng Po* (between 9 and 26 September) accusing Baperki of being dominated by communists, that is, Siauw Giok Tjhan and Go Gien Tjwan (Siauw T.D. 1999, pp. 219–31).

A more organized attempt to counter the ideas and activities of Siauw Giok Tjhan and the Baperki came about five years after the September 1955 elections. This came from a group of ten *peranakan* Chinese intellectuals, which included Injo Beng Goat and Auwjang Peng Koen, mentioned above (*Lahirnya Konsepsi Asimilasi*, Jakarta, 5th printing, 1977).[8] This group published what is referred to as "Statement Asimilasi" entitled "Menuju ke Asimilasi yang Wajar" (Towards assimilation in a natural way, or Towards voluntary assimilation) in *Star Weekly* on 26 March 1960. Of the ten, two of those still alive at the time of writing and also well known are

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Drs Lauwchuanto (now Drs Junus Jahja, a convert to Islam, who promotes the idea that the best way to resolve the "Chinese problem" would be for the ethnic Chinese to embrace the majority religion, Islam) and Ong Hok Ham (now Dr Onghokham, a historian). The group is in favour of voluntary assimilation, and rejects all coercive actions to achieve this end (pp. 60–61). This statement also rejected the concept of "integration" of Siauw Giok Tjhan.

In January 1961 a seminar on the theme of *Kesadaran Nasional* was held in Bandungan (Ambarawa). At the end of the seminar on 15 January, a statement referred to as *Piagam Asimilasi* was produced with thirty signatories, four of whom could be identified as ethnic Indonesian, while all the others were *peranakan* Chinese (only two of the ten of the *Statement Asimilasi* — the same two still alive mentioned above — were among them). This group is convinced that the only way to achieve a society that is just and prosperous is through the process of assimilation. In relation to the ethnic Chinese or *Warganegara Indonesia Keturunan Tionghoa* … "assimilation means for the people of Chinese origin to join and be accepted within the Indonesian nation, in such a way that eventually the group that was initially distinct, does not exist any more" (p. 143). The statement also made clear that they opposed the view of Siauw Giok Tjhan, as shown in the following: "The implication is to leave the group of Chinese origin and to refuse to maintain this group as a [distinct] group" (p. 144).

The further development of the so-called *Aliran Asimilasi* (assimilation stream) is the progressively closer relationship with the military, the ABRI (armed forces), until the group became more organized as the Lembaga Pembina Kesatuan Bangsa (LPKB, or Institute for the Development of National Unity) in March 1963 (*Lahirnya Konsepsi Asimilasi*, 1977: Epiloog: 149–51). In July 1963 it became an official government body under the aegis of the Menteri Koordinator Hubungan dengan Rakyat (Co-ordinating Minister for Relations with the People), Ruslan Abdulgani. It would be expected that after the abortive coup of September 1965, with the banning of the Baperki, the LPKB would have more influence in spreading its views. However, the *Aliran Asimilasi* did not reach the "grassroots" level of ethnic Chinese. Moreover, due to a special regulation on institutions, the LPKB and similar institutions were dissolved in November 1967. Only in 1974 did the group receive

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the support of the Governor of DKI Jakarta, then Ali Sadikin, to promote *pembauran* (assimilation), and he set up the Badan Pembina Kesatuan Bangsa DKI (Committee for the Development of National Unity DKI) with the task "to develop and create conditions in the Jakarta society conducive for the achievement of *pembauran*". The chair was an official of the Jakarta government, Wirjadi S.H., and the two vice-chairs were K. Sindhunata, S.H. (an ethnic Chinese lawyer, a Catholic, and an officer in the Navy), and Drs H. Ridwan Saidi (a leader of the Betawi ethnic group). Among the eleven members were eight ethnic Indonesians and three ethnic Chinese, two of whom were Muslims. Eventually, the government decided to put this committee on the national and provincial level and it became the Badan Komunikasi Penghayatan Kesatuan Bangsa, or Bakom PKB, with K. Sindhunata as chair.

Interestingly, much of the work of the Bakom PKB was in the area of functioning as the link between the government and the ethnic Chinese community, in particular, giving information and assisting in resolving problems related with citizenship, such as naturalization and the process of acquiring the *Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia* (SBKRI, or proof of citizenship documents). Rather ironically, this was originally the reason for establishing the Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia or Baperki, hence the name. The further developments towards the end of the Soeharto era and after will be discussed in the next section.

In discussing the participation and representation of ethnic Chinese in nation-building, we should not only look at the socio-political arena. Other areas in society are just as important in this process. Much is already known about the important role in the development of the press, film-making, literature,[9] but not much has been written about the ethnic Chinese in the development of science and technology, in particular exact/hard sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. This is evident in the book compiled by Leo Suryadinata on *Prominent Indonesian Chinese* (1995), a major reference source for this chapter. The names included tend to be "community leaders" and/or those politically active. An example of scientists not included are Go Ban Hong, an internationally known soil scientist from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB), and Oey Ban Liang, also an internationally known

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scientist in the field of biochemistry from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB).[10]

The end of the Soekarno era also meant the end of organized political activities of the ethnic Chinese. Besides the fact that the Soeharto government prohibited ethnic Chinese organizations, except for sports (but not those originating from Chinese culture such as lion dancing) and funeral associations, the ethnic Chinese themselves avoided getting involved in any activity related to politics. This is the result of the traumatic experience of the banning of Baperki and the imprisonment of its leaders and those considered sympathetic to this organization in 1965, not only in Jakarta, but of the chapters all over Indonesia. I will not go into the discussion of the laws and regulations that were discriminative and repressive to the ethnic Chinese, and that were clearly an abuse of their civic and cultural rights. Suffice it to note that since the end of the Soeharto regime there has been a strong movement among the ethnic Chinese to put pressure on the government to abolish these laws and regulations, and to make a clear distinction in socio-legal matters between alien Chinese (*Warganegara Asing*, or WNA) and ethnic Chinese or Chinese Indonesians, who are Indonesian citizens (*Warganegara Indonesia*, or WNI).

The Road Ahead

The question how many ethnic Chinese are there in Indonesia has never been satisfactorily answered, because from the beginning of census-taking (1961) since independence, for political reasons of downplaying the difference in size of the various ethnic groups, a direct question on ethnicity was never included. Hence, scholars studying this group of people have used proxies, or (most) have relied on the figures in the *Volkstelling* (Census) of 1930 (see, for example, Suryadinata 1997, pp. 103, 128), conducted by the colonial government, which has information on the number of the various ethnic groups, including the ethnic Chinese. From these figures extrapolations have been made, arriving at a proportion of 2.5 to 3 per cent of the total population. This figure has been used over the years, making the absolute figure around 5 million to 6 million. However, again, no doubt for certain political reasons, groups in society, both ethnic Chinese themselves as well as ethnic

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Indonesians, have played around with the figures of 8 to 10 million.

Now, the census of 2000 had included the question on ethnicity. Leo Suryadinata and Aris Ananta (an ethnic Chinese economist and demographer from the University of Indonesia, at present a senior research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore) are analysing this information on ethnicity. Leo Suryadinata informed me (in a personal communication) that using the results at the provincial level, they have come up with some interesting and unexpected information on the number of ethnic Chinese, which is much lower than the figure used so far as indicated in the previous paragraph. The reason is probably because the answer for this question on ethnicity is based on self-identification. If the figure is indeed significantly lower than expected, this could mean that among the ethnic Chinese, there must be a significant number who do not state that they are ethnic Chinese or of Chinese descent, indicating that they do not, or do not want, to identify themselves as such, which would be a finding worth looking into. In the mean time, this study of the results of the 2000 Census is published as follows: Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, Aris Ananta, *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003).

Whatever the final outcome of the calculations on the number of ethnic Chinese, the information on the numbers of the various ethnic groups (and the figures of the large groups are already available in the main publication of the census outcome) will be very useful, in particular for political purposes, in the face of the general and presidential elections coming up in 2004.

As far as the ethnic Chinese are concerned, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the incident often referred to as the tragedy of May 1998 is a watershed in the history of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Whereas during the thirty-two-year rule of Soeharto, the ethnic Chinese in general had refrained from participating in political activities, in the aftermath of May 1998 they have responded to the situation in a variety of ways, reflecting the heterogeneity of the ethnic Chinese group, and basically returning to the position of participating in mainstream politics as in the Soekarno period.[11]

Nonetheless, we should realize that by far the majority of ethnic

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Chinese will not participate in any organizational activity, political or otherwise. They will continue to go about their business, and hope and pray that their family will survive this multiple crisis. Their attitude is to be left alone doing what they have always done quietly.

But then there are those who take the position that the ethnic Chinese have to stop this attitude and behaviour of compliance. Like other citizens they should participate directly in politics and be represented in the decision-making process, especially in the legislature. Among this group, the so-called activists, there is again a variety of views and strategies on how to go about this. There are those who argue that throughout the Soeharto regime, and in fact also before that, as in the case of social disturbances, when the ethnic Chinese usually became the scapegoat, no one helped them. Therefore, it is legitimate for the ethnic Chinese to help and protect themselves, and the vehicle is a political party, set up by the ethnic Chinese, for the purpose of protecting and defending their interests.[12]

This idea was realized by a group of young ethnic Chinese, led by Lieus Sungkharisma, a member of the KNPI, the federation of youth organizations under the banner of Golkar (Golongan Karya) representing the Buddhist youths. He formed the Partai Reformasi Tionghoa (PARTI). Eventually, this party was not included among the forty-eight qualified to participate in the election of 1999. The reason for this, he explained (in a personal communication), is because he was not sure the party will get enough votes to win the number of seats in Parliament required to be considered legitimate (referred to as "electoral threshold"), in which case the party would not be allowed to participate in the next election in 2004. PARTI has now already registered as one of the two hundred or so parties to run in the election of 2004.

Another party, the Partai Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (PBI), was also initiated by the ethnic Chinese. The leader is an ethnic Chinese by the name of Nurdin Purnomo, who owns a travel agency. This party has non-ethnic Chinese in its leadership. It successfully passed the qualifying investigation and was the only one, recognized as an "ethnic Chinese" party among the forty-eight contestants in the election of 1999.

Interestingly, *Tempo* magazine conducted a survey on the potential voting behaviour of the ethnic Chinese in the one month from mid-

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December 1998 to mid-January 1999, six months before the election in June (reported in the issue of the third week of January). They selected five cities that are considered to have a high concentration of ethnic Chinese (Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Medan, Pontianak), and had a sample of 753 respondents (with 59 per cent being men, which is slightly more than the proportion of women). It appeared that the party of choice most mentioned was the PDI-P of Megawati (70 per cent) (multiple answers were allowed, so the total added up to more than 100 per cent), followed by PAN of Amien Rais (36 per cent), PARTI of Lieus S. (24 per cent), while the PKB associated with Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and the NU was in fourth place (15 per cent), and the Partai Golkar fifth place (13 per cent). We will note that PARTI who eventually did not participate was in third place, while the PBI was not mentioned at all.

How the ethnic Chinese will behave in the election of 2004 and whether they will continue to support Megawati's PDI-P is a moot point, because of her performance personally and that of her government, which has raised questions about her sincerity to end discriminative laws and behaviour towards the ethnic Chinese. Her government has not abolished a single one of these laws and regulations. She intervened to secure the necessary proof of citizenship document (SBKRI) for Hendrawan, so that he could go abroad to participate in the prestigious Thomas Cup badminton tournament, where he eventually won the Cup for the Indonesian team. However, she did not pursue this further by reinforcing the abolition of the law on the SBKRI, which was actually already done under the Soeharto government (1996) and later under Habibie (1999).[13] Today, there are still many cases where the ethnic Chinese have to produce the SBKRI and other related documents when applying for or renewing their passports at the Immigration Office, which comes under the Department of Justice and Human Rights.

To return to the various responses of the ethnic Chinese in the aftermath of May 1998, there are those, probably the majority among the "activists", who do not want to form a political party; instead they prefer to be a pressure group. They tend to call themselves a "Forum".[14] An example is the group to be formed at the initiative of Christianto Wibisono, the well-known director of the Indonesian Business Data

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Center (Pusat Data Bisnis Indonesia). At the first meeting in June 1998, there were about sixty people present, while the organizers had counted on only twenty people turning up. At one point the meeting almost became a shouting match between those who wanted to set up a political party with explicit mention of its Chinese identity in the name of the party, and with the clear objective to protect the rights and interests of the ethnic Chinese, and those who wanted a type of pressure group with broad-based objectives that would benefit all groups in society, including the ethnic Chinese. The name of the group was Forum Masyarakat untuk Solidaritas dan Demokrasi, or FORMASI, but it never took off; eventually it faded away.

Another such group is the Forum Komunikasi Kesatuan Bangsa (FKKB), which is actually an offshoot of the Bakom PKB, the "assimilationist" group chaired by K. Sindhunata. In 1995 he was replaced as chair by Yuwono Sudarsono, a Javanese professor of political science at the University of Indonesia (Tan 1997, p. 59). The other members of the executive board included H.S. Dillon, an ethnic Indian, and a professor in agricultural sciences, Natalia Subagio, a Javanese sinologist, Bachtiar Ali, an Achenese social scientist of the University of Indonesia (and since 2002 appointed Indonesian ambassador to Egypt), Rosita Noer, a Minangkabau businesswoman. Only two ethnic Chinese were left, the secretary-general M. Indradi Kusumah, a lawyer, and another member of the board, Usman Atmadjaja, an ethnic Chinese big businessman. The former members of the board, mostly ethnic Chinese, were elevated to the position of members of the council of advisers, including K. Sindhunata, Jusuf Wanandi (an ethnic Chinese political scientist from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, or CSIS), Harry Tjan Silalahi, also from the CSIS, Sudono Salim (Liem Sioe Liong) and William Soerjadjaja, both ethnic Chinese big businessmen, and Soekamdani Sahid Gitosardjono, an ethnic Indonesian big businessman.

When the FKKB was formed on 26 August 1998,[15] the executive board and council of advisers of the Bakom PKB became the leadership of the FKKB, with Rosita Noer as chairperson. The group also declared that they were no longer under the aegis of the Department of Home Affairs, as was the case with the Bakom PKB. Their major concern is the promotion

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of nation-building using the mechanism of advocacy to the leaders of the country and activities on the discourse level, through public dialogues and seminars involving various categories of people. For example, one of the seminars, held in February 1999, had as main speakers, General Wiranto, then Minister of Defense, and Yuwono Sudarsono, who had then become Minister of Education and Culture. Towards the end of 2002, the FKKB did not have a clear programme and it had few activities. As a matter of fact, in October 2002, there was a meeting of the executive board and council of advisers to discuss the existence of the group.

In the mean time, the Bakom PKB, which apparently had not been dissolved, was revived in 2002, still under the aegis of the Department of Home Affairs. The chair is Drs Ridwan Saidi,[16] who was a member of the executive board of the Bakom PKB. He belongs to the Betawi ethnic group and is a close associate of Junus Jahja, who was mentioned earlier as the person promoting the conversion of ethnic Chinese to Islam as the solution to the "Chinese problem".

There are three more organizations that function as a pressure group. First, there is the Perhimpunan Indonesia Keturunan Tionghoa, which uses the acronym INTI (for Indonesia Tionghoa), established on 5 February 1999. It focuses more on the promotion of nation-building. The *Ketua Umum* (general chairperson) is Drs Eddy Lembong, an ethnic Chinese pharmacologist and businessman, founder of Paphros, a pharmacological company in Jakarta. In 2002 the INTI signed a memorandum of understanding for co-operation with Universitas Islam Nasional Syarif Hidayatulah (the prestigious government Muslim university, formerly known as Institut Agama Islam Nasional, or IAIN, in Jakarta). The leadership of the INTI consists mostly of ethnic Chinese.

Then there is the Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (SNB), a group formed by Ester Jusuf Indahyani, an ethnic Chinese lawyer, whose late husband was a Batak. She and her group have been in the forefront of the fight to eliminate all forms of discrimination. In the book *Dua Tahun Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa* (SNB 2000, pp. 143–49) put out to commemorate the second anniversary of the organization, there is a list of the laws and regulations that are discriminatory towards the ethnic Chinese: from the colonial period until 1988 there were sixty-two legal products listed. Of these, forty-five were enacted during the Soeharto period from 1966

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to 1988. They had an impact on all aspects of life of the ethnic Chinese, from politics, especially on citizenship, socio-cultural aspects, and religion. The focus of the activities of the SNB is almost entirely on the elimination of discrimination and the attendant injustice.

Another organization that focuses on the elimination of discrimination is Gerakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi, known by its acronym Gandi. Its leadership includes both ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indonesians. Its chair is Anton Supit, an ethnic Chinese businessman.

In addition to these organizations in the category of "pressure group", there is an organization set up by people who feel more the need for a kind of support group, an association of like-minded people, who share the same feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about the long drawn-out crisis situation and who are prepared to help each other when needed. Such a group is usually called a *paguyuban*. An example of this is the Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia or PSMTI (Society for the Chinese Indonesian Ethnic Group). It was registered as a social organization with the Department of Home Affairs in September 1998. The chair is Brigjen TNI (Ret.) Tedy Jusuf, who is perhaps the only known ethnic Chinese one-star general of the TNI. This organization has branches in most of the provinces that have a sizeable ethnic Chinese population. In a personal interview he notes that the ethnic Chinese have to help themselves and each other, because no one else will do so.

Finally, there are the individuals who have decided that the best way for the ethnic Chinese to participate in politics would be to join one of the three existing political parties — Golkar, the government party under Soeharto, now called the Partai Golkar); the PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia), a group of which later separated into the PDI-P (PDI-Perjuangan) under Megawati Soekarnoputri; and the PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, the Muslim party) — or to join one of the newly established parties. Hence, there is Kwik Kian Gie of the PDI-P, while at the moment there is no one visibly active in Golkar, nor in the PPP. In the newly established parties, there is Alvin Lie in the Partai Amanat Nasional or PAN, set up by Amien Rais, the present chair of the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly). At the beginning, this party had two other ethnic Chinese, Sindhunata (mentioned earlier as one of the leaders of the assimilationist movement set up in the early 1960s),

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and Christianto Wibisono, founder and director of the Center for Business Data, or PDBI. Both have since left the party.

Towards the end of 2002, of the organizations set up at the initiative of the ethnic Chinese, the most viable, that is, the most active and visible, are probably the INTI, SNB, and PSMTI. An indication of this viability is their position of what needs to be done about the May tragedy, in particular about the recommendations put out by the Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta (Joint Fact-Finding Team),[17] established by then President Habibie to investigate the circumstances of the riots, looting, and burning of shopping malls (which resulted in about one thousand people, mostly ethnic Indonesian women and children being trapped in the buildings and killed) and residences, and the gang rape of mostly ethnic Chinese women and girls. So far, neither the government of Habibie, nor that of Abdurrahman Wahid, nor the present government of Megawati, have followed up on these recommendations.

Ester Jusuf with the SNB, the INTI, and the Forum Keluarga Korban Mei 98 (Forum of families of victims of May 98), and supported by PARTI and the PSMTI, have come to the office of the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) to pressure this Commission to continue the investigation of the May incident by setting up a Komisi Penyelidik Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia (KPPHAM, or Committee to Investigate Violations of Human Rights) on the May incident. She conveyed in a personal communication that the Commission has the responsibility to pursue this investigation further as the chair of the Joint Fact-Finding Team at the time was then the chair of the Commission, Marzuki Darusman.

Tedy Jusuf stated (also in a personal communication) that as chair of the PSMTI, he had written to President Megawati on the May incident and he had also met with the people at Komnas HAM. He hopes that the new leadership established in September 2002, which includes well-known human rights lawyers and defenders will be more responsive to demands to investigate the May tragedy. He also notes that the presence of Chandra Setiawan, the *Ketua Umum* (general chairperson) of the Matakin (the Confucian organization at the national level) as one of the new commissioners may be positive for the concerns of the ethnic Chinese. In fact, there was another ethnic Chinese who was in Komnas

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HAM, almost from the beginning of its existence, Professor Dr Charles Himawan, who had a Ph.D. in law from Harvard University, but he passed away in 2002.

There is no doubt that there are indications that more ethnic Chinese are included in the mainstream national activities of the society, and not only in the economic arena. They are included as speakers in forums that discuss the national situation. For instance, in October 2002 Paramadina University, whose President is Nurcholis Madjid (a well-known Muslim leader who is known to adhere to the concept of pluralism) together with the Institute for the Study of Business Ethics, which is headed by Fachry Ali, an Achenese, organized a seminar (which the present author attended) with the theme *Menyelamatkan Masa Depan Indonesia* (To save the future of Indonesia). One of the speakers was Mochtar Riady, founder of the Lippo Group, who enumerated the economic ills that need to be dealt with immediately and seriously, if Indonesia wants to recover from the present situation. In 2002, he was also invited to be the chair of the committee to select the president of Universitas Indonesia, a highly prestigious position.

However, there is also no doubt that the position of the ethnic Chinese remains tenuous as long as the economic situation continues to be uncertain, the political situation unstable, and the social situation and day-to-day life stressful. Today, the ethnic Chinese as a group have been more or less left alone, as the government and society in general are preoccupied with the general situation of ethnic and religious conflicts between so-called indigenous ethnic groups, the internal strife among various Muslim organizations, and the continuing violence in areas such as Aceh and Papua. In addition, there are the series of acts of terrorism, culminating, so far, in the Bali tragedy of 12 September 2002.

For the ethnic Chinese this should be a time to reflect on how to improve the image of the group in the eyes of ethnic Indonesians and in each other's eyes. There are still many cases of criminal acts, such as the discovery of the big factory for narcotics in Tanggerang that turned out to be owned and operated by an ethnic Chinese, the case of trafficking of women in West Kalimantan, where young girls from poor families are sold in marriage to Taiwanese men.

In short, the road ahead is still full of sharp turns and obstacles, and

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all groups in society should make a concerted effort to build the capacity to negotiate this road skilfully and peacefully.

NOTES

1. In the aftermath of the May tragedy, there continues to be an active and highly provocative discourse on the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia on the Internet, but mostly on the details of the event itself. More reflective and analytical studies have appeared since 1999. One of them is a volume edited by I. Wibowo, *Retrospeksi dan Rekontekstualisasi Masalah Cina* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1999). The contributors are young political scientists, historians, sociologists, both ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indonesians. The articles are highly interesting and extremely thought-provoking. The thrust of the approach of the book, as the editor emphasizes, is on a fresh look at the place of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society, away from the restricting format of the Soeharto government, that according to some of the contributors, had coloured the approach of earlier scholars on the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia during that period. Another book edited by the same author is *Harga yang Harus Dibayar. Sketsa Pergulatan Etnis Cina di Indonesia* [The price that had to be paid: a sketch of the struggle of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia] (Jakarta: Gramedia and Center for Chinese Studies, 2000). Then there is the provocative article by Ariel Heryanto, "Perkosaan Mei 1998: Beberapa Pertanyaan Konseptual" [The Rape of May 1998: Some Conceptual Questions], in *Negara dan Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan*, edited by Nur Iman Subono (Jakarta: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan, 2000).
2. Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, eds., *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945–1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970). This book has become a classic on the political thinking of the major actors in the early development of the Indonesian nation. It includes the writings of the actors of various political persuasions, the various religions, and the various ethnic groups, including the ethnic Chinese. This book is one of the major sources of reference for this chapter.
3. Siauw Tiong Djin has been visiting Indonesia regularly since 1998. He has been well received by the groups of ethnic Chinese "activists", such as the INTI (see the section on "The Road Ahead") and the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI). He has been asked to speak on many panels. When the book he wrote on his father, *Siauw Giok Tjhan: Perjuangan Seorang Patriot Membangun Nasion Indonesia dan Masyarakat Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* [Siauw Giok Tjhan: the struggle of a patriot to build the Indonesian nation and the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika society) (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1999), was launched on 28 August 1999 in the Omni Batavia Hotel, located in downtown Jakarta, there were about 650 people present, consisting mostly of ethnic Chinese. The panel of speakers to discuss the book included Professor Dr Daniel Lev, then of Washington State University in Seattle, Professor Sahetapy, a well-known legal expert from the University of Indonesia, Professor

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Dr Franz Magnis Suseno, a highly respected Jesuit priest and scholar, Dr Karlina Leksono Supelli of the University of Indonesia, a noted feminist activist, Dr Daniel Sparinga, a sociologist from the Airlangga University in Surabaya, Dr A.S. Hikam, a social scientist from the LIPI. There was no mention of any ethnic Chinese among these panellists. See Siauw Tiong Djin and Oey Hay Djoen, eds., *Sumbangsih Siauw Giok Tjhan dan Baperki dalam Sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra. Pengantar Penerbit, 2000), p. 8.

4. This part is based on my paper (pp. 3–4) "Pandangan Bung Karno mengenai Keragaman Etnis Masyarakat Indonesia" (Bung Karno's view on the ethnic diversity of Indonesian society), presented at a seminar on "Pandangan dan Gagasan Bung Karno" (Views and ideas of Bung Karno), organized by the National Archives of Indonesia to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of President Soekarno, which fell on 6 June 2001.
5. Leo Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese: Biographical Sketches* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995). This is another major source of reference for the present chapter. It is the third edition of the book that in its first edition was titled *Eminent Indonesian Chinese* (1995). On Oei Tiong Ham, see Yoshihara Kunio, *Oei Tiong Ham Concern: The First Business Empire of Southeast Asia* (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1989); Liem Tjwan Ling, *Raja Gula Oei Tiong Ham* (Surabaya: Liem Tjwan Ling, 1979).
6. This story of Liem Koen Hian is taken from Leo Suryadinata, *Mencari Identitas Nasional. Dari Tjoe Bou San sampai Yap Thiam Hien* [In search of national identity: from Tjoe Bou San to Yap Thiam Hien] (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi Sosial, 1990). This book has the life histories of eight prominent ethnic Chinese, all of whom are now deceased.
7. Mary F.A. Somers, "Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia", Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1965); see also Charles Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983); Charles Coppel, *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia* (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002).
8. *Lahirnya Konsepsi Asimilasi,* 5th printing (Jakarta: Yayasan Tunas Bangsa, 1977). In the Introduction (p. 14) of the volume it is stated that the first printing appeared in 1961. It includes the articles published in the highly popular *Star Weekly,* which were the polemics between various views about nation-building and assimilation among the ethnic Chinese intellectuals at the time. It lasted from early 1960 until mid-1960. There is also a highly interesting "Epiloog" of further developments of the activities of the "assimilationists" up to 1977.
9. See, for instance, Myra Sidharta, "Pers dan Sastra Melayu Tionghoa Cikal Bakal Pers dan Sastra Nasional" [The Chinese Malay press and literature as the origin of national press and literature], paper presented at the seminar on "Peran Etnis Tionghoa dalam Perjalanan Sejarah Indonesia" [The role of the ethnic Chinese in the course of Indonesian

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history], organized by the INTI and the daily *Suara Pembaruan* on 9 November 2002 in Jakarta.

10. The prestigious Akademi Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (AIPI, or Indonesian Academy of Sciences) has one ethnic Chinese member and it is planned to invite two more in the near future. In the mean time, the two persons invited towards the end of 2003 are Thee Kian Wie, an economist with a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Mely G. Tan, a sociologist, with a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.
11. This part is based on my paper "The Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: Trials and Tribulations" prepared at the invitation of the U.S.-Indonesia Society (USINDO) for presentation at a number of universities and academic institutions in the United States from 31 March to 8 April 1999. This paper, with the same title, is included as a contribution in the book Ferdinand Suleeman et al., eds., *Bergumul dalam Harapan: Buku Penghargaan untuk Pdt. Dr. Eka Darmaputra* [Struggling in hope: a tribute to the Rev. Dr. Eka Darmaputra] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999).
12. Idem.
13. For an explanation of the complications of the SBKRI, see M. Indradi Kusuma and Wahyu Effendi, *Kewarganegaraan Indonesia: Catatan Kritis atas Hak Asasi Manusia dan Institusionalisasi Diskriminasi Warga Negara* [Indonesian citizenship: critical notes on human rights and institutionalization of discrimination of citizens] (Jakarta: FKKB, GANDI, 2002), pp. 97–100.
14. See note 11. For a detailed description and analysis of the political activities of the ethnic Chinese after May 1998, see also Leo Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), chap. 6.
15. This is based on information from a knowledgeable source at the FKKB.
16. Idem.
17. The report of the TGPF is published in the *Seri Dokumen Kunci* (Key documents series) of the "Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan" [National Commission on Violence against Women], known as Komnas Perempuan, *Temuan Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta Peristiwa Kerusuhan Mei 1998* [Findings of the Joint Fact-Finding Team on the May 1998 Incident] (Jakarta: Publikasi Komnas Perempuan, 1999). It includes the report of the Voluntary Team on Humanitarian Aid, which is on the incidence of gang rape mostly perpetrated on ethnic Chinese women and girls.

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CHAPTER 3

Pri and Non-Pri Relations in the Reform Era: A Pribumi's Perspective

A. DAHANA

This chapter examines ethnic relations — particularly Chinese and non-Chinese relations — in Indonesia from the *pribumi* (*pri*)[1] perspective. It begins with the changing attitude of the indigenous Indonesians towards the Chinese Indonesians following the May 1998 tragedy, from one of rejection to tolerance, if not acceptance as equals. It also examines *pri* and non-*pri* relations prior to the May riot as well as the factors that contributed to the tragedy. It further addresses the deeply seated prejudice of the *pribumi* against Chinese Indonesians and the challenges faced by the ethnic Chinese after the May tragedy. The conclusion points out that in the midst of the unfinished process of reform, the possibility of the recurrence of a similar tragedy cannot be ruled out.

Pribumi's New Attitudes towards the Chinese and Chinese Culture

There have been many changes, including in ethnic relationships, in Indonesia since the fall of Soeharto in May 1998. However, the changes

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in ethnic relationships come with opposing underlying feelings between the people involved. On the one hand, we see a tendency towards tolerance of differences; on the other hand, there is intolerance. This is illustrated in the paragraphs that follow.

While in Kalimantan the Dayaks and the Madurese are killing each other, in Ambon and Poso the Christians and the Muslims are destroying each other, public (read: *pribumi*) tolerance to ethnic Chinese, Chinese culture, and Chineseness in general seems to have re-emerged. Nowadays, any occasion seems incomplete without the *Barongsay* performance or the Chinese lion dance show. In fact, several political parties used the lion dance in their political campaigns for the 1999 general elections. Radio and TV stations play Mandarin songs, while every evening almost all TV stations broadcast *sinetron* (electronic cinema or TV drama) from Hong Kong, Singapore, and China. *Meteor Garden*, a TV serial about love among young people is very popular not only among ethnic Chinese teenagers but also among the *pribumi*. The interest to learn the Chinese language has suddenly increased even among *pribumi* young people. Many language schools now offer Mandarin classes and newspapers are full of advertisements of Mandarin lessons. Chinese language newspapers have emerged everywhere; in Jakarta alone there are at least seven such newspapers even though the target market is still very limited because of the policy of the New Order government, which has made it difficult for people to learn the language.

In September 1998, President B.J. Habibie issued a presidential instruction to stop the use of the terms *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* in all government policies and in their implementation. The decree also instructed the bureaucracy to give equal services and treatment to all people regardless of religion, ethnicity, and origin. Furthermore, the president instructed a review of all existing regulations, laws, and policies including those related to services, job opportunities, and the determination of wages or salaries and other workers' rights. In 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid issued an instruction that revoked Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 concerning restrictions for the Chinese to practise their religion, beliefs, and tradition and customs (James Dananjaya 2001). Since then *Im Lek* or the Chinese New Year has been celebrated openly. In line with this, not long after being installed as President, Megawati issued a decree making *Im Lek* one of the national

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holidays. The decrees issued by Presidents Abdurrahman and Megawati revoked the New Order regulations that only allowed Chinese New Year celebrations in private and among family members.

At the élite level the advancement achieved by the ethnic Chinese is promising. One of President Megawati's cabinet members, Kwik Kian Gie, a popular co-ordination minister, had taken the populist side particularly in his opposition to Indonesia's dependence on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is often in conflict with that of the Minister of Economics Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti. This attitude has made Kwik very popular among the people. Another political figure, Alvin Lie, a member of the People's Representatives from the Partai Amanat National, is very critical towards various government policies and is also an advocate of multiculturalism in politics and pluralism in culture. Kwik and Lie have proven that the belief that the Chinese are only interested in doing business and have no interest in politics is incorrect. The condition that I have described as being constructive and positive is balanced by the strengthening relationship between Jakarta and Beijing. If in the past the New Order government only based this tie on economics, the relationship has now been extended to the areas of education and culture.

Therefore, we can say that with regard to China, the Chinese, Chineseness, and Chinese culture, most Indonesians seem to have shown increasing tolerance while the New Order government has abandoned its policy of forced assimilation. Seen from this perspective, Indonesia has entered multiculturalism and abandoned monoculturalism. "Multiculturalism", according to Suparlan, is an ideology that respects individual as well as group differences in politics and culture. Furthermore, he says that "multiculturalism" is a view that places all different cultures at the same level, including those of the minorities (Suparlan 2001).

However, this new trend may be only superficial and deceiving. The country still has a long way to go towards democracy, multiculturalism, and pluralism. After more than thirty years of authoritarianism under the New Order government, Indonesia is currently in a transitional phase in which various "time bombs" are ticking away and ready to explode at any moment. Those time bombs range from short-sighted nationalism, national and ethnic chauvinism to racism, stereotyping and general-

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ization, poverty, social jealousy, and other negative beliefs. And since there is no rule of law, strong government, and strong leadership, we are not sure when this transitional period will end. This is the first basic argument in my presentation.

Second, racial hatred or the hate for a particular group of people in Indonesia is another time bomb that can be triggered by seemingly trivial events. In fact, many anti-Chinese riots have been ignited by minor incidents such as a traffic accident, a brawl between young people, a quarrel between a trader who happens to be a Chinese with a customer who happens to be a *pribumi*. The following two paragraphs illustrate how insignificant incidents can cause an explosion of rampant racial riots, particularly aimed at the Chinese, that go on and on for days.

The anti-Chinese riots in Regasdengklok, West Java, that started on 30 January 1997 was triggered by a small conflict between an ethnic Chinese and a group of children. The ethnic Chinese, Cik Gweh, aged forty-nine, had reprimanded a group of children for beating the *bedug* (a huge drum used to call people to prayer) at 2.00 a.m. Incidentally this occurred during the fasting month. Feeling offended, the children started an argument, which perhaps could be easily resolved, but obviously was not. Then at around 7 o'clock the following morning a group of young people surrounded Cik Gweh's house, and started to demolish it and eventually burnt it down. Cik Gweh and his family survived the attack; nevertheless, riots broke out all over the small town, during which a Chinese temple and a church were also damaged. The situation was very tense because the destruction of the possessions of the Chinese continued for five days, resulting in the destruction and burning of hundreds of houses and vehicles. Riots spread quickly as rumours were going around that Cik Gweh had stamped on an *Al Qur'an* with his feet. The atmosphere in Bandung, the capital of West Java, was affected, and riots burst out in Rancaekek, a small city about 20 km. south of Bandung. The general feeling of outrage affected the workers who were demanding higher wages, and they burned down a factory. Fortunately, the police and military forces finally managed to control the situation (*Suara Independen*, 3 January 1997). The Rengasdengklok case is an example of many anti-Chinese riots caused by seemingly trivial incidents.

If we look back to those times since the pre–New Order era, there

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seems to be a fixed pattern: the anti-Chinese riots have always been ignited by seemingly insignificant incidents. On 27 June 1973, a group of youths in Palu took to the streets and wrecked havoc to the Chinese stores because some heard that a storekeeper had used pieces of paper containing verses from the *Al Qur'an* to wrap merchandise. In April 1980, anti-Chinese riots raged in Makassar because of rumours that a household maid had been beaten to death by her Chinese employer. On 20 November 1980, a fight between a *pribumi* and a Chinese schoolboy in Solo quickly flared into a full-blown riot in which houses and other possessions of the Chinese in that city were destroyed and burnt. In September, Surabaya was struck by anti-Chinese riots started by news about a Chinese employer who had tortured a *pribumi* household maid. In November 1995, anti-Chinese riots broke out in Purwakarta, West Java, simply because, it was alleged, a Chinese girl had stolen a bar of chocolate from a shop. On 14 January 1996, masses of young people ran amok and destroyed shops and cars belonging to the Chinese. This occurred after a concert by a popular rocker Iwan Fals, whose lyrics usually contained protests against injustice and inequality. Anti-Chinese riots occurred in Makasar on 15 September 1997 after a Chinese named Benny Kare, who suffered from bouts of insanity, struck a *pribumi* child with a sword. These various incidents described above were a prolog to the biggest riots in the history of the Republic of Indonesia which occurred in mid-May 1998, and which led to the fall of Soeharto and his New Order government.

Pribumi Perceptions of the May 1998 Tragedy

The series of incidents that occurred on 13 and 14 May and became a prologue to the fall of Soeharto and his New Order government is certainly a national tragedy in which the ethnic Chinese, particularly the women, were the major victims. The incident, which is the worst ever in the history of inter-racial relationships between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi*, took place in a country whose national slogan, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), is used as the foundation of the nation. This is a big blow to the country. There is no need to describe the atrocities that occurred as such stories have spread rapidly around the world particularly through the Internet in cyberspace.

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But what were the factors that led to this humiliating and shocking incident? This writer will try to analyse the causes based on documents that he has managed to compile.

An analysis made by the Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta (TGPF, Fact-Finding Combined Team) set up by the government after the incident, compares the riots that occurred in Jakarta, Solo, Surabaya, Lampung, and Medan. The TGPF concludes that there were very similar patterns in those riots. The report divides the analysis into two parts: one at the macro level and the other at the micro level. At the macro level, the incident cannot be separated from the context of Indonesian social and political dynamics at the time. This level was marked by a series of incidents in the general elections of 1997, the economic crisis, the General Assembly of the People's Consultative Council of 1998, a string of student demonstrations, and the kidnapping of student activists for which General Prabowo Subianto, the Commander of the élite Strategic Commando Military Forces, was responsible and which eventually led to his downfall. This condition was aggravated by the political struggle between élite parties to keep the New Order government in power. That indication was proven by the change in just a week after the riots broke out.

At the same time, a financial and monetary crisis brewed up, which widened the gap between the rich and the poor, thus strengthening the perception of increasing injustice in the society. This resulted in expansive social dislocation, and gave rise to horizontal conflicts (class conflicts) and vertical conflicts (race and ethnic conflicts). The political and economic crises further fuelled the spread of excessive mass violence, and people resorted to violence as a shortcut to solve all kinds of problems. Among those factors that incited the violence mentioned above, Muslim radicals and fanatics, who had been marginalized for more than thirty years during the New Order era, had a role in it. Some people manipulated the emotions of their followers to make them feel that they were discriminated against and that therefore it was necessary that they took steps to protect themselves. According to the TGPF report, the anger was directed at the ethnic Chinese because of racial prejudice against the Chinese in the community (ibid.).

Mohamad Sobary candidly stated that there now prevails in Indonesia a sentiment called "populist authoritarianism", which justifies

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violence committed by the masses. According to Sobary this populist authoritarianism is as follows:

> … its wrappings are like side-taking in the populist theory or ideology, defending the rights of the oppressed, but inside there is falsehood and manipulation. There individual interest manipulates populist ideas to gain emotional support. It can infiltrate into organizations, possibly in groups that are venting their anger and disappointment at the imbalances in the society. This idea of populist authoritarianism has emerged for a long time. We know that if a car hits a motorbike, *becak* or *bajaj*, and if that is a luxury car — particularly [if] it belongs to a Chinese — the car will be destroyed even though it might not be the owner's fault. In this era of reformation, this is the authoritarian attitude that is developing in our society. Anything that is considered "community", "people", "the public", "unions or associations" are practically "sanctified" and considered to be able to do no wrong. Secretly we claim that the ultimate truth is in our hands. (Sobary 2002)

Further, Sobary states that such an attitude shows that most Indonesians still suffer from an acute psycho-pathological disease that emerges in the form of the mentality of "the oppressed". To be able to overcome this problem, we have to map out all organizations and movements that claim to be struggling for the people and to identify those that are socio-politically healthy and genuine as well as those that are only political "vehicles" for their activators. A wide-spreading phenomenon of populist authoritarianism was manifested by the occurrence of anti–ethnic Chinese incidents in all parts of Indonesia not long after the mass riots exploded in Jakarta as a consequence of the killing of a few students from Trisakti University in May 1998.

At the macro level, after studying various reports from cities that had experienced mass riots, the TGPF has found a similar pattern in the riots, starting from the planning to the execution (TGPF 1998). Nevertheless, the TGPF is very careful when drawing out conclusions and refrains from stating that the series of incidents were part of a national conspiracy that had been thoroughly planned (ibid.). Commenting on the sexual violence towards Chinese women, the TGFP states that it occurred because of the opportunity that arose and the formation of mass psychology that seemed to permit such incidents to happen on a mass scale. That the report does not mention the number of victims of sexual harassment is because there is a law which demands that victims

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report themselves; but victims of sexual harassment find it very difficult to do so (ibid.). So, in the first place, what brought about the May 1998 incident? According to the TGPF, the incident resulted from the lack of co-ordination between the security forces, sluggish anticipation, the haphazard execution of commands, security forces that allowed the violence to happen, and the limited number of security forces in comparison with the vast areas where violence had broken out. The report states that in general the participants of the riots, the majority of whom consisted of the urban poor, became victims of those very riots they had incited as they became the tools of the planners of the riots (ibid.).

An Internet site named "Shire of Remembrance: Sexual Violence against Chinese-Indonesian Females", put up by the Volunteers for Humanity Team, strengthened the indications of the TGPF report by compiling detailed information on the 13–15 May incident, particularly information related to Jakarta. This Internet report stated that the location of mass rape was spread throughout Jakarta, the *modus operandi* of the inhuman brutality had a pattern, and that there were 152 victims, twenty of whom lost their lives. It also stated that the riots, violence, and destruction of the possessions of the ethnic Chinese occurred simultaneously with the mass raping of Chinese women. After the incidents, threats were launched at the victims and their families to prevent them from reporting their plight and to prevent the volunteers from investigating the incidents. The pattern in which the brutality was carried out pointed to a network of people involved in the destruction who had strong links with those who committed the sexual violence. The report concluded that the incident was a big conspiracy that had been planned and meticulously implemented (Volunteers for Humanity Team, 1998). Further, by scrutinizing the characteristics of the actors of the riots and considering the professional way in which they pushed the masses to commit those atrocities, the report was implicitly accusing the army of being involved in those riots. The report did not consider the torching, destruction, and rape as a racial attack of the *pribumi* on the ethnic Chinese. The large numbers of potential non-*pribumi* victims who were brought to safety by the masses who were largely *pribumi* proved this.

All Indonesian writers whose articles were published in various media

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denounced the brutality of the May 1998 incidents and many tried to analyse those incidents from different perspectives, including that of gender. Karlina Leksono, an activist of the women's movement, supports the conclusions made by the Volunteers for Humanity Team, but she added a gender dimension to it. She believes that there are two factors that led to the victimization of ethnic Chinese women — their gender and their Chineseness. These two factors turned them into "the Others" that could become the targets of violence (Supelli 1998, pp. 8–9).

Social issues observer Adhie M. Massardi sees the May 1998 incident as the peak of failure of the SARA politics (SARA is the Indonesian acronym for ethnic groups, religion, race, and intergroups) practised by the New Order government. SARA politics, according to Massardi, segregates people into little boxes labelled with one of the four elements to preserve national security and order and to avoid conflict. In this segregation, the ethnic Chinese are looked upon as "the Others" and not as "we". During the first twenty years of the New Order government, its policy could be considered successful. However, in the last ten years this policy became a boomerang for the government. At a time when the movement for democracy and openness succeeded in tearing down the walls of those boxes, one of the victims was the ethnic Chinese (Massardi 1998, pp. 38–39). The reasons were clear: they were seen as being too closely linked to the authorities, the rich, and the group that had enjoyed the greater portion of prosperity. Meanwhile, another social observer, Ch. N. Latief, believes that the roots of the May 1998 tragedy lie in the widening gaps between the people and the unjust treatment by the bureaucracy during the New Order government:

> What was given to and enjoyed by our brothers, the ethnic Chinese, in the form of facilities, credit loans, projects … ranging from big to small both at central as well as regional levels, hurt the *pribumi* deeply. Protest against this bureaucratic injustice had been launched for some time only to fall on deaf ears. *Pribumi* were more and more marginalized. Business partners, official partners from government agencies, not to mention business partners from kinsmen of officials, both civilians and military, were for the most part composed of ethnic Chinese. (Latief 1988, p. 42)

In accordance with Latief's line of thought, the SARA policy, which was initially meant to prevent SARA conflicts became, as a matter of fact,

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triggers of SARA conflicts due to the social inequity that marginalized the *pribumi*.

Commenting on why the ethnic Chinese had always become targets of mass anger, Imam Syafii, a reporter for the *Jawa Pos* in Surabaya, revealed that it was the "sins" of the ethnic Chinese that led to the brutal and inhuman *pribumi* actions against them. He stated that there was a generalized view about the non-*pribumi* that the public was not happy about. Firstly, he indicated that there was a disharmonious secondary relationship with the wider environment, particularly with the *pribumi*. He added that the phenomenon was due to the success of the ethnic Chinese in dominating the economic sector as a result of their perseverance and the expertise that they had acquired from their primary environment (read: socialization in their own circles). Syafii also saw that the ill feelings against them were mostly due their tendency to live exclusively both in terms of place of residence as well as their circles of socialization. Furthermore, the close relationships between the conglomerates and the authorities have given rise to growing *pribumi* suspicion towards the ethnic Chinese. "Black" figures such as Eddy Tansil (the economic manipulator on the run) and Hartono (the most famous pimp in Indonesia) are always considered as models of the ethnic Chinese community in general (Syafii 1998, pp. 130–31).

Syafii's criticism of the "sins" of the Chinese community was mixed with a tone of empathy and towards the end of his article he encouraged the non-*pribumi* to develop their role in society and to enter into fields that they have hitherto not touched, that is, non-economic fields (ibid., p. 131). It is interesting to note that Syafii's suggestion met with a response from Anita Lie, ex-Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Petra University Surabaya, in an article of self-criticism of a non-*pribumi* towards her own community. Anita Lie was not offensive and did not reject the issues mentioned by Syafii. In fact, she added a few more items to the list of "sins" of the Chinese. This activist from Surabaya said that the biggest sin of the ethnic Chinese was their acceptance of what they considered as their "fate". During the thirty years of the New Order government, the sector that was open to the ethnic Chinese was the economic sector. This led to the tendency to label the non-*pribumi* as "economic animals":

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> During the three decades the process of construction … was so excellent that not only the general public but also the Chinese themselves accepted it as fate that could not be changed: that their rights and duties in this country were limited to the economic sector. Not many Indonesian citizens, including the Chinese, remembered a historical fact that together with the Javanese, the Bataks, the Madurese, and other ethnic groups, the Chinese also took part in the struggle for independence. (Lie 1999, p. 134)

In answer to Syafii's remark about exclusive residences, Anita Lie said that the reporter was not very observant because the exclusive Chinese residences were not an ethnic tendency but rather one of class. She added that only few ethnic Chinese actually lived in those exclusive residential areas (ibid., p. 135). Another sin indicated by Anita was the reluctance of the ethnic Chinese to reject the insinuation that they were identical with the likes of Eddy Tansil and Hartono, and that they themselves were "furious and revolted" by the behaviour of Chinese tycoons involved in corruption and collusion with some members of the bureaucracy. Further, Anita stated that when the people condemned the behaviour and the sins of Eddy Tansil, Bob Hasan, and Sudono Salim, only very few ethnic Chinese figures — Arief Budiman, Kwik Kian Gie, and Christianto Wibisono — were brave enough to openly reject being generalized by the *pribumi* (ibid., p. 136).

Ignas Kleden believes that what happened in May 1998 can be compared with what happened in Germany during the reign of Hitler. However, he rejects the view that the incident was the sole result of ethnic hatred. Ethnic, cultural, and racial differences can cause obstructions in communication, but they will not naturally lead to ethnic resentment. Inter-ethnic relationships, Kleden continues, will only change into enmity leading to violence if those differences coincide with the domination of one ethnic group over another which is not caused by some natural consequence but rather due to a government policy. He points to the ethnical stratification practised by the Dutch colonial government which was later adopted by the post-colonial government (Kleden 1999, pp. 152–54).

Although people are beginning to forget the tragedy of May 1998, it will remain deeply etched in the memories of those who became its victims. It is an ineradicable trauma for the ethnic Chinese women who became victims of sexual violence. Deep down a question stirs: will such

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a tragedy recur? It is very difficult to answer such an important question, as there are two conflicting tendencies. First of all, Indonesia is in the middle of a period of transition. This implies that as there is no supremacy of law, no strong central national government, anything could happen. Secondly, there is a tendency towards a greater tolerance of Chinese culture and identity. This is the issue which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Nationalism, Nation-Building, and Chinese Identity

One of the points agreed upon by the Indonesian founding fathers when they decided to establish a country which was to be named Indonesia, was the fact that the country consists of various ethnic groups, each having diverse customs, traditions, and cultures. In the mechanism of running the country and the nation, this principle makes it possible for everyone to preserve and practise his/her religion, customs and traditions, and culture. This principle is manifested in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,* which basically means "Unity in Diversity". This principle, which explicitly demands the co-operation of all elements of the nation in the nation-building, and disregards ethnicity, religion, and culture, as the foundation of the government. Nevertheless, the principle is easier formulated than put into practice. Since the 1950s up to the present, there have been various struggles in the regions, among which several — starting with PRRI/Permesta, Timor Leste, up to Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, or the Free Aceh Movement) and Free Papua — have developed into strong separatist movements. Those movements were mainly caused by the strong role and influence of the state and central government, which is dominated by a majority ethnic group which tends to neglect regional aspiration and other minority groups.

Historically it can be said that the minorities were unsatisfied with the central government as it was seen to be a prolongation of the Dutch colonial government. This is evident in, for example, the legal system. The legal system and the law books (both civil and criminal) that are used in this country are inherited from the Dutch. The same is true of the system of citizenship. The colonial government divided the society into three classes: (1) European, (2) Foreign Orientals, and (3) *pribumi*, each with different rights and with discriminative practices towards the

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latter two categories. When a nation-state was formed and the Europeans banished, the classification of citizens continued, with discriminative treatment of the ethnic Chinese, who had previously been put into the second category.

Other factors are nationalism and democracy. It cannot be denied that the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia is the culmination of the nationalistic struggle for independence started in the 1920s. In addition to this, the Provisional Constitution which was implemented during the liberal period (up to the mid-1950s) and the return to the 1945 Constitution which was proclaimed by President Soekarno in 1957 and the formation of boards of representatives for every region and the centre, proved that whatever it practised, Indonesia was basically a democracy. However, according to Horowitz, nationalism and a society segregated by ethnic elements are characteristic of developing nations and unfortunately, in such nations, including Indonesia, nationalism is not compatible with democracy. This is because in a pluralistic society ethnic identity provides a clear demarcation to decide who can participate and who cannot participate in politics (Horowitz 1998, p. 430). He further states that in ethnic relationships the historical factor often encourages the creation of a concept of society that is exclusive. For example, the authority or the majority often determines who is to be the authority in a certain area. The answer would usually concern the race or the ethnic group that is considered to be there first. Those who consider their ancestors to be the first ones to arrive at a certain place usually claim bigger political rights and power or even take others over by force (ibid., p. 50).

The treatment of the Chinese minority in Indonesia followed the patterns described by Horowitz. The Chinese, being non-*pribumi*, were discriminated against by the *pribumi* in terms of citizenship and the process to gain citizenship. In the extreme case, the incompatibility between nationalism and democracy will give rise to cases of ethnocentricity and narrow nationalism, which, for instance, occurred in Yugoslavia, and the rise of ultra-nationalistic leaders such as Slobodan Milosevitch with his ethnic-cleansing programme. The Tragedy of May 1998 has not reached such an extreme because almost everyone condemned the atrocities and according to many reports, many victims

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or possible victims were saved by both the *pri* and non-*pribumi*.

The huge influence that a nation has over its people and individuals, the concept of nationalism, which is often not compatible with democracy, and the obsession of the people in power to preserve an integrated and united country are, according to Hikam, the reasons that a civil society has not been established in Indonesia. This tendency in turn has marginalized pluralistic concepts, eventually leading to discriminative treatment of the minorities, particularly the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (Hikam 1998, p. 1). The pressure on the ethnic Chinese to change their names — even though this was not mandatory — the obligation to show their SBKRI (letter of proof of Indonesian citizenship) for all matters related to the bureaucracy, and a special symbol on the identity card, are examples of the practice of this government policy. Some of the leading figures of the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia, for example, considered the Indonesian-Chinese double-citizenship agreement of the 1950s as a mistake made by the two governments. Because of this agreement, the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia were forced to actively choose to retain their Chinese citizenship or to become Indonesian citizens. If this agreement had not been made, according to the Dutch law adopted by the post-colonial government, the ethnic Chinese would have automatically received Indonesian citizenship.

The most bizarre case occurred in 2002 in an incident in Garut, the capital of one of the bigger regencies in West Java. On 30 June and 1 July 2002, the situation in Garut, a usually peaceful city, suddenly became tense because of issues that anti-Chinese violence was going to erupt. Fortunately, the news was just a groundless rumour. However, it turned out that the source of this rumour was actually the regional government itself, which should have been responsible for the security and order of its territory. This was triggered by a case involving a small businessman named Acun Somabrata (Sie You Le), sixty-two years old, who earned his living selling medicine in a small shop. It turned out that behind the façade of the medicine shop he offered illegal banking services. He accepted monthly deposits with a 10 per cent monthly interest rate. Of course this was very attractive as bank savings only offered 13 per cent in interest per year. Eventually Acun got himself into debts of 4.2 billion

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rupiah that he could not repay. His 200 clients, which consisted of the man in the street, civil servants, and soldiers, were terrified that they would not get their money back so they reported the case to the police. This news, which soon spread throughout the city, making his other clients feel uneasy, eventually turned into rumours of the possibility of riots at the end of May. The Musyawarah Pimpinan Daerah (Muspida) consisting of the bureaucracy of the municipal, the police, military, and the Attorney-General aggravated the situation when it distributed invitations to various ethnic Chinese circles. These invitations put pressure on the Chinese to make contributions to pay for the debts of Acun or else there would be anti-Chinese riots. About 400 ethnic Chinese accepted the invitation of the Muspida and in the meeting the Regent of Garut, Dede Satibi, asked them to help Acun to clear his debts or riots would erupt in the city.

The Regent's request met with resistance from the people attending the meeting. In the end, the participants at the meeting demanded that the case be brought to court and that Acun's family assume responsibility for his debts. However, the Regent continued to appeal to the Chinese to take responsibility for Acun's debts (*Suara Pembaruan*, 31 July 2002). The case was not heard of anymore. Maybe this was because the bureaucrats in Garut were embarrassed by the national media coverage the case had attracted. This illustration shows the power of the authorities and the fact that there are still those who generalize all ethnic Chinese into one category.

However, a bibliographical study that this writer carried out shows that almost all *pribumi* concepts about the relationships between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* in Indonesia after 1998 support "multiculturalism". An interesting article by Krisnina Maharana in *Kompas* daily states that the melting-pot concept glorified in the West, which basically demanded other ethnicities to melt into the Anglo-Saxon culture that has been abandoned and replaced by the concept of a salad bowl, in which every ethnic group has the freedom to preserve their own identity. This salad-bowl concept is, according to the writer, parallel to multiculturalism, although the writer did not relate this to the *pribumi*–non-*pribumi* relationship in Indonesia (Maharani 1999). Kleden in this case again showed the powerful role of the government in determining unity. He

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said that the slogan "Unity in Diversity" has a deeper meaning than suggested. On the one hand, it acknowledges the heterogeneity of ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and races; on the other hand, it demands unity in the form of political commitment. However, what occurs in practice is the opposite: the ethnic and cultural diversity is forced into homogeneity for the sake of unity and integrity (Kleden 1999, p. 156).

Another writer, Salim Said put forward three facts. First, the existence of a government that is too powerful for a post-colonial society that is still weak, resulting in a government that is not controlled by the people. Second, the fact that a minority of 4 per cent dominates 60 per cent of the economy. Third, the government as the manager of economic affairs has put too much emphasis on development, neglecting equality. All this has opened up huge opportunities for corruption and collusion which in turn has led to ethnic conflicts and acts of violence (Said 1998, p. 60). There is still debate about whether the ethnic Chinese dominate 60 per cent of national assets. However, he argues that the violence that was aimed at the ethnic Chinese was caused by economic factors. Maharani underscored the importance of education to prepare the younger generation to accept ethnic and cultural heterogeneity (Maharani 1999).

Education in civics, which teaches the youth to accept heterogeneity in ethnicity and culture, to accept the fact that being different is not a sin, to accept the principle of pluralism, and that differences do not have to develop into antagonism, is, of course, ideal. Unfortunately, we will have to wait a very long time to see the fruits of this education in the next generation. Nevertheless this does not mean that the programme should be postponed. In the case of the Indonesian youth, there is a ray of hope that they will accept pluralism. In the circles of youth in their teens, an interesting phenomenon has occurred. Their pop idols now not only consist of local or Western pop idols but also include Asian music or cinema stars, in particular Chinese pop stars. The most popular soap opera among teenagers, both *pribumi* and non-*pribumi*, is a serial named "Meteor Garden", a love story starred by four Chinese members of a Taiwanese boy band F4. Another teen idol from Taiwan, Vaness Wu, had a successful show in Jakarta in late 2002 that attracted thousands of *pribumi* and ethnic Chinese teenagers.

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Impediments for *Pri* and Non-*Pri* Cordial Relations

Relations between the *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* in the post–New Order era in Indonesia are improving, and both sides have come to some level of understanding, particularly in terms of tolerance towards difference. But this is still at an early stage in the development, and the cordial relations may be only superficial. Although the environment is conducive, this transitional period is fragile and can easily relapse, perhaps to the situation under the New Order. As to the impediments for the development of cordial relations, almost all writers referred to in this chapter point to the economic factor (apart from other factors) as being the main cause of antagonism towards the ethnic Chinese. It is stated earlier in this chapter that violence towards the ethnic Chinese is a time bomb that can explode any time, even when triggered by non-racial factors.

In conclusion, a few matters are listed below that could obstruct the creation of good inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations, particularly between the *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* (in this case, the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia). Firstly, the most dominant factor in my opinion is the economic crisis, which is not showing signs of improvement. Other Asian nations that were struck down by the economic crisis have got back on their feet. In contrast, Indonesia has not yet recovered. This is mainly because the Indonesian élite have been busy fighting each other instead of working to rev up the economy and looking into how the welfare of the people can be improved. They have been less preoccupied with how to improve the economy than with devising strategies to enable them to win the next general election scheduled to take place in 2004.

Secondly, closely related to the first factor mentioned above is the danger of displaying excessive wealth. In times of crisis such as the May riot, social jealousy could trigger an uprising. Communication with various intellectual and prominent figures in the ethnic Chinese community has confirmed such a fear in the ethnic Chinese. But in general they believe that racial antagonism has declined because of the shocking effect of the May 1998 tragedy. However, all are of the opinion that if riots were to occur again in Jakarta, the targets will not be those who look Chinese but everyone driving a car. Some parties looking for an opportunity to ignite racial riots could urge a mob to attack car drivers

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this way. This could happen because in the minds of the people, the Chinese are identical with the rich.

The third factor is ethnocentrism, coming from *pribumi* as well as non-*pribumi* circles. As an example, pressing demands to eliminate and abolish the use of the term *Cina* and to put the expression *Tionghoa* back into use to refer to ethnic Chinese and the term *Tiongkok* to refer to the country China will and has caused the annoyance of several *pribumi* circles. Another example is the demand to consider the ethnic Chinese as a *suku*, a term used to refer to an ethnic group parallel with the Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau, Bataks, Madurese, and others. The argument against this is that to be considered a *suku*, there should be a place of origin. The ethnic Chinese do not have a place of origin and therefore cannot be considered an ethnic group. The formation of a Chinese party and other forms of associations that are suspected of being "exclusive" can again cause antipathy. At present a party based on race has been established, that is, Partai Reformasi Tionghoa Indonesia (Reform Party of Tionghoa Indonesians). Three leading social figures — Hikam, Surya Paloh, Kwik Kian Gie — one of them an ethnic Chinese, consider this race-based party behind the times. In addition, there is the Perhimpunan INTI (Association of Chinese Indonesians) which is often accused of being the "new Baperki" — the left-wing Chinese organization during the Soekarno era. Nevertheless, this writer sees these moves to establish associations based on race as a response to the fact that during the thirty years of the New Order government, there was not even one party that was able to protect the Chinese community and their interests when they were under threat. Benny Setiono, a *peranakan* writer who is also a member of the INTI Management Committee, reported the re-emergence of Chinese clan associations with very strong financial backing but whose orientation is towards mainland China and Chinese culture and whose management is very paternalistic, similar to Overseas Chinese organizations in the past.

The normalization of relations between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the opening of the Chinese embassy in Jakarta, regrettably, could be one of the destabilizing factors that can shatter *pri*–non-*pri* relationships in Indonesia. Currently the Chinese embassy in Jakarta is too aggressive and its priority is on meeting its

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immediate objectives, without giving due regard to improving racial relationships in its efforts to approach local Chinese organizations. For example, the PRC has requested Chinese organizations to condemn Falun Gong and to push the Indonesian government to curb the popularity of the movement in Indonesia. It is interesting to note that even the Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) practise Falun Dafa. The Chinese embassy has also encouraged the local Chinese to be against the Taiwan side in the rivalry between Beijing and Taipei. Some local leaders of Chinese organizations and activists are very concerned with the Chinese embassy's policy, as it could aggravate anti-Chinese sentiment among the *pribumi* and shatter the sympathy and mutual understanding between the *pri* and non-*pri*, which is still in its initial stage of development. In their opinion, Falun Gong and Taiwan problems are China's domestic affairs and should not involve Indonesians of Chinese origins.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the fact that many *pribumi* leaders have changed their attitudes towards Chinese Indonesians and Chinese culture since the May tragedy, the resentment against the Chinese still remains. The so-called "multiculturalism" subscribed by many *pribumi* leaders is quite limited and superficial. It is more of a tolerance than full acceptance and equality of Chinese culture with "indigenous" culture. *Pribumi* Indonesians still subscribe to "indigenism" and ethnic Chinese being foreigners are expected to conform to *pribumi*-defined Indonesian nation and nationalism. The perception that Chinese Indonesians continue to have a superior economic status also gives rise to resentment among the *pribumi*. Since there has not been full acceptance of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia as "genuine Indonesians", their position in Indonesia remains precarious. This is accompanied by the unfinished process of reform — unresolved social, political, and economic problems. If there is another political or economic upheaval, anything undesirable may happen again.

NOTE

The use of terms *pri* to refer to "native Indonesian" and non-*pri* for non-indigenous people (read: ethnic Chinese) is currently not encouraged. However, for convenience, the terms are still used here.

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CHAPTER 4

Racial Discrimination in the Indonesian Legal System: Ethnic Chinese and Nation-Building

FRANS H. WINARTA

Racial discrimination against the ethnic Chinese manifested itself in colonial laws. These laws in different forms continued to be upheld after Indonesia's independence and impeded national unity in Indonesia. This chapter examines the legal position of the Chinese in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial era with special reference to some of these laws made during the New Order regime. It also discusses these laws in the context of international laws against racial discrimination and ends with some suggestions to resolve the issues which affect nation-building.

The Legal Position of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia

The ethnic Chinese, constituting about 3 per cent of the population, have been in Indonesia for centuries. They were treated as a racial group different from other populations in Indonesia. During the colonial time they were perceived as harmful towards the indigenous population by

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the Dutch, and after Indonesia's independence, they were perceived to dominate Indonesia's economy by many indigenous Indonesians. In fact, they have been discriminated against since the colonial period.

Racial discrimination against the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has been considered a given. The colonial administration segregated the migrant Chinese community and perpetuated the racial prejudice against them. Ethnic Chinese have been recognized as part of Indonesian society since the Dutch colonial era. Article 163 of IS (*Indische Staatsregeling Wet van 2 September 1854, Ned. S. 1854-2, S. 1855-2 jo.1*) stated that Indonesia consisted of three groups of people, namely (1) European people; (2) foreign Orientals (including the Chinese, Indian, and Arab); and (3) indigenous people.

However, racial division can be a form of racial discrimination. The Chinese appeared to have been singled out in such discrimination. This was the intention of the Dutch colonial rulers, through this divide and rule practice between indigenous people and the ethnic Chinese. The prejudices about the two "racial groups" were perpetuated. The ethnic Chinese were described by the indigenous people as being a very cagey community, selfish and exclusive, while the indigenous people were regarded by the ethnic Chinese as an inferior group who were hostile to the ethnic Chinese, and could not be trusted. This ethnic and racial division was maintained until the New Order government of Soeharto, as were the prejudices.

The first President of Indonesia, Soekarno, upheld the prejudices and banned the ethnic Chinese from engaging in retail trades in rural areas, but it was not until 1965, when Jakarta accused Beijing of supporting a failed coup attempt, that racism was institutionalized. The government contended that the policy would accelerate the process of assimilation. A systematic campaign against the Chinese then followed. Chinese language publications, with the exception of one officially sanctioned daily newspaper, were banned. No Chinese materials were allowed to be imported or published in Indonesia.

During the early years of the Soekarno era, although the authorities placed more emphasis on the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the poor who were mainly indigenous people, the Chinese were treated as ordinary citizens by the government. When Soekarno

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introduced Guided Democracy in 1959, this policy remained unchanged. Only when Soeharto replaced Soekarno and introduced crony capitalism, did the social gap between the ethnic Chinese and the rest of the nation become a significant issue. The New Order regime channelled the Chinese to the economic sector, making the Chinese stronger in the economic field while suppressing them in the political, social, and cultural arenas.

A more sophisticated method was applied by the New Order regime to compartmentalize society and create distinctions between groups, for instance, the distinctions between the Javanese and non-Javanese, Muslims and non-Muslims, the military and civilians, natives and non-natives, and others. The New Order also limited, pressured, and destroyed the political and civil rights of the ethnic Chinese.

Such discrimination was legitimized during the New Order era in several laws and regulations legitimizing a certain negative impact on the ethnic Chinese. The culture of the ethnic Chinese was generalized as having a bad influence and being inappropriate to the indigenous people. The changing of Chinese names into Indonesian names indicating assimilation, which had nothing to do with patriotism and nationalism, also perpetuated the anti-Chinese policy.

The relationship between ethnicity and the indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomy in post-colonial societies must be viewed in a national context. The form of the Indonesian state was at first federal, a format that could cater to different regional/ethnic interests.

When they first came to power, the indigenous élite in Indonesia introduced a more liberal policy towards the *peranakan*[1] Chinese, who by Dutch law were Dutch subjects. All became Indonesian citizens provided that they did not repudiate Indonesian citizenship. Indonesia's 1945 Constitution recognizes the human rights of its citizens. A commitment to human rights is embedded in fifteen principles.

Nevertheless, a more exclusive term, "orang Indonesia asli" or "native Indonesian", was also introduced in the 1945 Constitution, which states that only an "Indonesia asli" person is eligible to become president. Apart from this, there is no other institutionalization of special rights for indigenous citizens.[2] In fact, Article 27 of the 1945 Constitution states that "All citizens have the same position before the law and the government".

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It took thirty-two years to lift the ban. Dr Habibie, who replaced Soeharto as president, abolished such racial division through Presidential Instruction No. 26 Year 1998 regarding the Cessation of Using the Terms Indigenous (*pribumi*) and Non-Indigenous (non-*pribumi*) in the Carrying out of Government Policy, Implementation of the Program or Governmental Activities. However, more significant moves were made by the elected president, Abdurrahman Wahid, who was sympathetic to the plight of the ethnic Chinese. One of his striking moves, considering that Soeharto kept Chinese Indonesians out of the Civil Service, was to appoint Kwik Kian Gie as the Co-ordinating Minister of the Economy, Finance, and Industry.

Discriminative Laws and Regulations versus Nation-Building

The history of racial discrimination shows that discriminative policies evidently become an obstacle in forming a good relationship and peacefulness among ethnic groups in one country. Racial discrimination is categorized as detrimental to the harmonization of the people who live together in one country and its national security.

Nation-building is an essential process in the consolidation of the independence and unity of the Republic of Indonesia. During its existence (1954–66), this was represented and advocated by Baperki (Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia). In view of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), the state slogan, Baperki pursued the acceptance, as an integral part of the nation, of ethnic Chinese throughout society in Indonesia.

This was systematically brought to an end by the New Order. In fact, during that period, the term "nation-building" was eliminated from the political arena.[3]

One of the challenges for Indonesian legal development is to create a national legal system capable of accommodating rapid changes in line with international legal practices. However, the framing of new laws should be responsive to the aspirations of a changing society and should only proceed while continuing to protect Indonesian community interests, especially those of the minority groups. In other words, the

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challenge is the formulation of a national legal system able to support national development.

The efforts to build the Indonesian nation cannot ignore the rights of its citizenry. This has a legal impact on the existence of Indonesia as a nation. In other words, racial discrimination cannot be legitimized as each citizen has equal rights and obligations. Citizenship is not recognized on the grounds of race, colour, antecedence, religion, ethnic origin, or social status. As a result, any prevailing laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination have no constitutional basis and must be nullified.

In Indonesia, there have been several conflicts ignited by these discriminative policies, such as in Maluku (1999–2000),[4] West and Central Kalimantan, as well as in Papua. It is not only the conflicts but the legal system and other regulations and government policies in the form of the constitution, laws, presidential and regional decrees and instructions that perpetuate racial discrimination.

The discrimination through various regulations which the ethnic Chinese suffer can be categorized as cultural genocide. According to Geoffrey Robertson, this is "… (the prohibition) of the use of a group's language, rewriting or obliterating its history or destroying its iconography …".[5] A revision of Law No. 62 Year 1958 regarding citizenship is urgently required. It has to apply not only *ius sanguinis* but also *ius soli,* so all ethnic Chinese born in Indonesia have Indonesian nationality and are citizens to be treated as equally as other Indonesian citizens.[6]

Certificate of Evidence Regarding Indonesian Citizenship

A significant issue concerning the status of ethnic Chinese as Indonesian citizens is the Minister of Justice Decree No. JB. 3/4/12 Year 1978 regarding SBKRI (Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia, or the certificate of evidence regarding Indonesian citizenship), particularly Article 1 which states that "each citizen of Indonesia must prove his citizenship by applying for a SBKRI to the Ministry of Justice".

From the above provision, it appears that all Indonesians have to prove citizenship through the possession of a SBKRI. In practice, this refers to all Indonesian individuals of foreign descent. It provides legal

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certainty for Indonesian individuals of foreign descent who do not have other evidence of Indonesian citizenship. However, in practice this Ministerial Decree only applies to the ethnic Chinese.

Pursuant to the provision of Article 1 of the Joint Decree of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Internal Affairs No. M.01–UM.09.03.80 and No. 42 Year 1980 ("Joint Decree"), it is stipulated that the SBKRI may be granted to an adult of foreign descent who wishes to become an Indonesian citizen but has no other evidence of Indonesian citizenship. Moreover, according to Article 4 of the Joint Decree, the possession of an SBKRI is direct evidence of Indonesian citizenship of the individual concerned.

The issuance of an SBKRI shall not be subject to stamp duty or any administration fee (Article 2 sub-paragraph 2 of Joint Decree). However, as reported by *Kompas*, one of the leading Indonesian newspapers, the estimated fee for the issuance of an SBKRI ranges from Rp. 1 million to Rp. 7 million. The processing of an SBKRI takes around two to three weeks.[7]

Recently, an Indonesian citizen wrote to a local evening newspaper to describe his bad experience and to share his thoughts on the negative impact resulting from the SBKRI.[8] He claimed that they, the ethnic Chinese, are still obliged to submit a SBKRI in any application process with respect to their civil status, such as the process in obtaining marriage and birth certificates.

Such a discriminative policy adopted the politics of racialism and was intended for the sake of national security. However, the SBKRI has now also become a source of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. As it is now bureaucratized and, thereby, institutionalized, it is difficult to eliminate.

The government has to respond firmly, urgently, and properly to this matter; otherwise, the resulting disharmony will obviously be to the detriment of the development of the nation.[9]

Despite Presidential Decree No. 56 Year 1996 and Presidential Instruction No. 5 Year 1999, which was issued during the Reform era and intended to eliminate the SBKRI, in practice it is still required for the ethnic Chinese. Moreover, the SBKRI is apparently incorporated into the bill on citizenship intended to replace current regulations, which

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is now being debated by Parliament. The government as well as the members of Parliament should further note the Governmental Regulation No. 5 Year 1947 which states:

> In the legislation of the citizenship act evidence of Indonesian citizenship is not required in the case of a person who is definitely and desirably becoming an Indonesian citizen, namely the indigenous people and peranakan. Therefore, documentary proof of Indonesian citizenship is generally granted only to the person who was not previously an Indonesian citizen, namely to the foreign subject who becomes an Indonesian citizen by naturalization.[10]

Other Laws and Regulations

Other laws and regulations concerning the social and cultural fields and the religion of ethnic Chinese are, among others, (i) Presidential Instruction No. 14 Year 1967, which came into force on 6 December 1967, concerning the manifestation of cultural, religious, and Chinese tradition aspects by limiting the scope of family worship houses. (ii) Presidential Decree No. 240 Year 1967, requiring Indonesian ethnic Chinese to change their Chinese names to Indonesian names. (This is despite the fact that each Indonesian citizen is equal before the law and has equal rights and obligations.) It is also stated in Presidential Decree No. 240 Year 1967 that such citizens shall be assimilated as to avoid any racial exclusiveness and discrimination. (iii) TAP MPRS (Resolution of Temporary People's Consultative Assembly) No. 32 Year 1966 regarding the banning of Chinese language and characters in newspapers and stores/companies. (Only one newspaper, *Harian Indonesia,* was allowed to be published in Chinese.) (iv) Law No. 62 Year 1958 regarding Citizenship, an Indonesian ethnic Chinese has to have the SBKRI, a letter evidencing the changing of his Chinese name into an Indonesian name and K-1 Letter to prove his or her Indonesian citizenship.

Almost all the above laws and regulations were enacted during the Soeharto era. It is clear that the governmental policies and their legal products have violated human rights conventions, particularly, the rights of Chinese Indonesians to enjoy their own culture. Some observers thought the May riots and attacks on the ethnic Chinese in 1998 were provoked as a form of ethnic cleansing to create a vacuum in the country's retail and distribution network. The attacks were terrifying for the

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Chinese living in Indonesia and resulted in an exodus from Indonesia of the ethnic Chinese. However, after the fall of Soeharto, only one of the above regulations, PP. No. 14/1967, was abolished on 17 January 2000 by President Abdurrahman Wahid (Keputusan Presiden RI No. 6 Tahun 2000), but the rest remain valid.

Racial Discrimination in International Law

Racial discrimination is an illegal discriminative action based on race, ethnicity, religion, culture, and other human traits, for example, superior/inferior complexes, envy, and prejudice. Discrimination in Indonesia can be viewed from two perspectives: namely vertical and horizontal perspectives of discrimination.[11]

Vertical Perspective of Discrimination

A study conducted by Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (SNB) reveals that approximately sixty-four laws and regulations, implemented by the Dutch colonial rulers and still valid today, contain ethnic/racial discrimination. These laws and regulations basically impose limits upon certain groups of citizens, in particular the ethnic Chinese and non-Muslims, in their everyday lives.

Horizontal Perspective of Discrimination

After experiencing repressive rule of more than three decades, the euphoria of freedom of speech has led to conflicting statements among various groups in society. Due to these social, political, and economic conflicts, which create certain prejudices and mistrust, the social and psychological aspects of Indonesian society have entered a phase of societal fragmentation. As a result, Indonesian society is inexorably disintegrating.

Racial discrimination always causes victimization. The Race Relations Act, Canada 1976 (RRA) clearly states that this victimization constitutes an illegal act. By this discriminative illegal act a person is treated by other persons or group in such a way that he is less comfortable compared with others in certain conditions. The RRA further explains that discrimination occurs not only during the discriminative action, but also prior to the action. A person is a victim when he is facing a discriminator or is involved with him in any way. It also falls into the

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category of victimization if in the process of facing such discrimination he also testifies or provides information by law.[12]

Minority Groups and Types of Minority

A minority group is a group of people who are different in certain aspects compared with those of the principal group in the society. The principal group is dominant and has stronger political and economic powers than those of the minority. In many cases, the dominant group intentionally separates itself from the minority, and thus, the minority has fewer chances in the social, economic, and political realms.

From the racial perspective, a minority group is also termed a racial minority, meaning that the differences between it and the principal group also include the differences in physical appearance such as skin color and type of hair. The people of Papua are an example of a racial minority as viewed by the people of Java.

Besides racial minorities, there is also a societal category termed as "ethnic minority", who are differentiated on the basis of their cultural practices, such as dialect, religion, and custom which are different from those of the dominant group.[13]

An ethnic group is a group of people sharing the same characteristics but which is distinguishable from other groups. These characteristics relate to ancestral ties, cultural practices, language, race, religion, or a combination of these characteristics.

The ethnic Chinese in Indonesia constitute a minority ethnic group as they have different cultural practices from other Indonesian people.[14] Compared with other ethnic groups in Indonesia, such as Indians and Arabs, the ethnic Chinese have faced the most difficulties in keeping their existence under the pressure of integration/assimilation, as their cultural characteristics are significantly different from those of other ethnic groups in Indonesia.[15]

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination is a human rights violation. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination[16] states that "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, national, or

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ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life.

Each state party to this convention undertakes to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee to everyone the following rights, among others:

1. The right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice.
2. The right to security of person and protection by the state against violence or bodily harm.
3. Political rights, particularly, the right to participate in elections, to take part in the government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service.
4. Other civil rights, in particular (i) the right to freedom of movement and residence; (ii) the right to leave any country; (iii) the right to nationality; (iv) the right to marriage and choice of spouse; (v) the right to own property; (vi) the right to inherit; (vii) the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; (viii) the right to freedom of opinion and expression; (ix) the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
5. Economic, social, and cultural rights, in particular: (i) the right to work, to equal pay for equal work; (ii) the right to form and join trade unions; (iii) the right to housing; (iv) the right to public health, medical care, social security, and social services; (v) the right to education and training; (vi) the right to equal participation in cultural activities.
6. The right of access to any place or service intended for use by the general public.

Since Indonesia ratified the above convention on 25 June 1999, the Indonesian government has to take action necessary to encourage and ensure the adequate development of those racial groups and individuals who need the full protection of their fundamental rights, including the right to enjoy their own minority culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language. In practice, the government

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may adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends, and laws and regulations that impose criminal sanctions on any discriminative treatment.

Since mid-1998, the government has given serious thought to the ethnic Chinese issue: that the ethnic Chinese should exist, defend their rights, accomplish their rights and obligations as other Indonesian citizens do. The ethnic Chinese, with other ethnic groups, have started to establish non-government organizations to fight against racism. Moreover, political parties, social organizations and other mass organizations with anti-racism political programmes have been established that are intended to improve the situation and condition of Indonesian ethnic Chinese.

This can only be achieved if the ethnic Chinese themselves start to, among other things, participate in politics and become prominent figures in the executive, legislative, and judicative fields, and in military service.

Possible Solutions

There are four ways to achieve the above ends: [17]

Political Participation

Politically, the ethnic Chinese should struggle for democratic rights, among others, by participating in politics at every level. The aim to be achieved by participating is not only to defend the interests of the ethnic Chinese but also to actively contribute to the national interest through contributing to the democratization process. Such political participation may be performed through three ways; namely, participation in various NGOs, in political organizations, and in the establishment of institutions that could express the interest and aspiration of the ethnic Chinese in the political, economic, and social fields.[18]

Legal Certainty

The political and social climates in a state very much depend on the prevailing laws and regulations. The initiative for nation-building must be associated with an Indonesian citizenship, which gives legal meaning to the existence of the Indonesian nation. Had the state been deeply concerned about such meaning, the racial discrimination would have never been legitimized. Every Indonesian citizen has constitutionally the same rights and obligations regardless of his or her ethnic origin,

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race, religion, or social status but the government had enacted numerous decrees and regulations against the ethnic Chinese.

Social Harmony

Harmony in society will be the main platform in reducing or even eliminating the roots of discrimination as implemented by the Dutch colonial rulers and later developed by the New Order regime. Thus, the ethnic Chinese have to integrate themselves into all levels of national activities, without being required to disavow all their characteristics or identity. The aspirations of the Indonesian people are also the aspirations of the ethnic Chinese. The existing differences have to enrich and strengthen the existence of the nation. Unity in Diversity does not mean that every ethnic group has to meld into the majority.

Economic Equity

Any settlement of the problem of the ethnic Chinese cannot be separated from the effort of national welfare. The ethnic Chinese businesses have to put more emphasis on the acceleration of collective welfare. Any profit gained has to be distributed maximally to their employees so as to increase their standard of living.

The ethnic Chinese should enter into the bureaucracy, the military, Parliament, the judiciary and other state institutions, and should participate in all aspects of life and thereby contribute to the development of the country. Moreover, the government should be proactive in opening its doors to enable the ethnic Chinese to enter such institutions. At the same time, affirmative action is required to protect indigenous businesses so that they can compete. Loans should be allocated to enable them to start a business.

In short, the government should develop a just and fair economic system protecting small businessmen and enabling them to develop their businesses in the rural and urban areas. Crony capitalism should not be allowed, thus removing the resentment against the ethnic Chinese.

The above suggestions, which are very much related to the building of the nation, are considered to be the best solutions and would guarantee an accelerated process to resolve the problems of the ethnic Chinese. Increasing political awareness from the highest level to the grassroots is

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one of the most important ways to educate the ethnic Chinese of their rights, duties, and obligations as part of the Indonesian citizenry.

Moreover, in this era of *reformasi* (reform), particularly in the legal system, discrimination on whatever grounds, be it cultural, political, economic, or social, should not exist as it violates conventions on human rights. In this matter, the Indonesian government has to have the political will to abolish discrimination against any person, including the ethnic Chinese. The government has to amend, repeal, or nullify any governmental laws and regulations that have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination, such as Law No. 62 Year 1958 on Citizenship. Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and amendments to the 1945 Indonesian Constitution are critical with respect to the civil rights of Indonesian citizens.[19]

The segregation, dichotomy (*pribumi* versus non-*pribumi*), and sixty-four laws and regulations, which are discriminative in nature, in fact work against the concept of a nation according to the founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia[20] and against Pancasila, the state philosophy,[21] which believes in harmony among different groups of diverse backgrounds.

Concluding Remarks

Many of the conflicts involving ethnic groups in Indonesia are due to the political and economic exploitation of the ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. It follows, therefore, that the participation of Indonesian ethnic Chinese in politics at every level will raise their political awareness and motivate them to contribute, together with other citizens, to the betterment of the nation-building process.

Cultural orientation and social identification are rapidly changing. The older generation of Chinese Indonesians is more oriented to their original ethnic identity but the younger generation consider themselves to be truly Indonesian people. Thus, it is hoped that the reformation era coupled with transparent government will eventually lead to harmonious nation-building.

More than 300 laws and regulations inherited from the Dutch colonial era are obsolete and do not meet with the requirements of a

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modern state and the realities of international trade. The challenge for the Indonesian legal reform movement under the strong influence of international legal practices is to create national laws capable of accommodating the rapid changes. This, however, should proceed while continuing to protect the interests of all Indonesian communities including the Indonesian ethnic Chinese. In other words, the formulation of new laws should take into consideration the aspirations of a changing society, and should support national development as a whole.

The story of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and the discrimination against their culture is nothing but a crime against humanity and must be condemned. Any effort to abandon discriminative laws and regulations must start with the political will of the Indonesian government to uphold human rights and democracy. In particular, it must create a democratic system in the political arena and electoral process.

Last but not least, these must be expressed in the Indonesian Constitution as the supreme law of the state. The discriminative laws and regulations should be reviewed through a judicial review by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia. As stated by Stanley I. Kutler, "… the theory of every … government must be that an act of the legislature, repugnant to the constitution, is void." [22]

NOTES

1. The *peranakan* were Chinese already partly assimilated into the Indonesian society. *Peranakan* Chinese were Indies-born and generally had indigenous blood from the female line. Most of them did not speak Chinese but communicated in their native languages. Unlike the *peranakan*, *totok* Chinese were those still culturally Chinese. *Totok* Chinese were China-born, still spoke a Chinese dialect or Mandarin, and were often China-oriented. This community was separated from the *peranakan* community, which had come into being earlier. For further discussion of *peranakan* and *totok* Chinese, see Leo Suryadinata, *The Culture of the Chinese Minority in Indonesia* (Singapore: Times Book International, 1997), pp. 77–80.
2. See Leo Suryadinata, *Chinese and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia*, Asian Studies Monograph Series no. 3 (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 1997), p. 53.
3. Siauw Tiong Djin, "Partisipasi Golongan Tionghoa dalam Bidang Politik" ["Participation of Tionghoa Group in politics"], mimeographed, Jakarta, 29 April 2000.

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4. The conflict in Maluku and North Maluku was a religious conflict. It resulted in 2,740 dead, 2,835 seriously injured, 14,016 houses and stores burnt down and nineteen places of worship seriously damaged or burnt down. See Komisi Penyelidikan Pelanggaran Hak Azasi Manusia, Komnas HAM (National Commission on Human Rights), Information, Data and Evidence concerning the Maluku and North Maluku, p. 2.
5. Geoffrey Robertson, QC, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* (Australia: Penguin Group, 2000), p. 229.
6. As quoted in Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa, *Rancangan Undang-Undang Anti Diskriminasi Ras dan atau Etnis* [The racial and ethnic anti-discrimination bill] (Jakarta: Asia Foundation, 2002), p. 28.
7. *Kompas* (Jakarta), "SBKRI Jadi Sumber KKN'" ["SBKRI as the source of KKN"], 24 June 2002.
8. G.S. Wisdarmanto, "*Tuntaskan Segera Status Bukti Kewarganegaraan* RI" ["Eliminating urgently the certificate of evidence regarding RI citizenship"] (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan), 4 November 2002.
9. According to Satya Arinanto, an expert on Indonesian Administrative Law, the SBKRI is simply a project from which certain persons involved in the process of issuing SBKRI gain the benefits. Government policy regarding the SBKRI is not clear, however. The SBKRI has to be repealed from all of the prevailing laws and regulations, not only at the level of Presidential Decree. As quoted from "SBKRI Jadi Sumber KKN" ["SBKRI as the source of KKN"].
10. Unofficially translated by the writer from the following original text in Indonesian "bahwa dalam sistem undang-undang warga negara Indonesia suatu bukti kewarganegaraan Indonesia tidak diperlukan untuk orang-orang yang tentu dan diharapkan menjadi warga negara Indonesia; yaitu untuk orang Indonesia asli dan untuk orang peranakan. Maka bukti kewarganegaraan negara Indonesia hanya diberikan kepada orang yang pada umumnya bukan warga negara Indonesia, yaitu kepada orang asing yang menjadi warga negara Indonesia dengan naturalisasi."
11. Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (op. cit., p. 10).
12. Ibid., pp. 11–12.
13. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted and opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965 and came into force on 4 January 1968.

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17. Frans H. Winarta, "Tugas dan Kewajiban Etnis Tionghoa dalam Membangun Bangsa dan Negara", in *Tugas dan Kewajiban Etnis Tionghoa dalam Membangun Bangsa dan Negara* [Tasks and duties of the ethnic Chinese in the nation and state building], edited by Benny G. Setiono (Jakarta: Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa, 2002), pp. 25–34.
18. Charles A. Coppel in his book *Tionghoa Indonesia dalam Krisis* [Indonesian Chinese in crisis"] describes that the Indonesian ethnic *Tionghoa* (Chinese) are always in dilemma as to what to do in politics. If they are deeply involved in a political party that is opposed to the government, then they are labelled as subversives. However, if they support the government in power, society will regard them as opportunists seeking only profit therefrom. See Bambang Setiawan, "Mendung Politik Di Balik Imlek" ["Cloud over Chinese New Year"], *Kompas*, 12 February 2002.
19. As regulated in Article 2 paragraph (c) of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, "*Each State Party shall take effective measures to review governmental, national and political policies and to amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists.*"
20. As quoted from Ernest Renan: "*Nation state* is a group of people who want to live together because they have the same situations and conditions, currently and in the future have the same faith, therefore they decided to live in one united nation in the future".
21. A national philosophy, Pancasila means "five pillars". The five pillars are: (1) belief in one God; (2) justice and civility among peoples; (3) the unity of Indonesia; (4) democracy through deliberation and consensus among representatives; (5) social justice for all.
22. Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *The Supreme Court and the Constitution*, Readings in American Constitutional History, 3rd ed. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 29.

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CHAPTER 5

Differing Perspectives on Integration and Nation-Building in Malaysia

LEE KAM HING

As Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad moves on to his final year as Prime Minister of Malaysia, a theme he has now come to express more regularly is that of nation-building and the need for greater integration of the ethnic groups. Responding to a question from an Indian journalist during his official visit to New Delhi on 17 October 2002, Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad considered forging closer race relations in Malaysia as his most important achievement as Prime Minister.[1]

Yet he also expressed concern at the growing racial polarization among the younger generation. On 13 August 2002, when opening the new Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, he noted that young Malaysians were not mixing well. At schools and in universities the different races kept to their own groups, and he expressed disappointment that the warm inter-ethnic interaction he experienced while at the university is less in evidence today.[2] On 13 October, he noted that "the Chinese only want to go to Chinese schools, Indians prefer Tamil schools and Malays want to send their children to religious schools".[3]

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Dr Mahathir's worry about ethnic polarization appears supported by recent media and university surveys on ethnic relations in schools and universities.[4] A study carried out on ethnic relations in all the states by a Universiti Kebangssan Malaysia team commissioned by the National Unity Board highlighted this polarization trend. The data from the survey offer few explanations as to why there has been increased polarization. There were, interestingly, state variations in the findings. Some observers of the Malaysian situation suggested that ethnic polarization has to do with unevenness in economic development. And there are also those who questioned the use of ethnicity as a criterion in policy formulation to redress economic and educational imbalances and contend that this reinforces existing ethnic sentiments and sharpen divisions within society. Furthermore, recent religious resurgence among the different groups has added to this sense of separateness of the various communities.

Government leaders were naturally concerned with the findings of such surveys. Several initiatives have in recent months been made to check this drift towards ethnic polarization. In the second National Economic Consultative Council that met in 2000 to prepare a prospective ten-year development plan, a panel was formed to draw up policies on national unity. There have since been calls from political leaders for the ending of state-based societies at universities that are predominantly of one ethnic group and, instead, the setting up of unity clubs. The sharing of hostel rooms by students from different ethnic background was also proposed. There have been government moves to bring together national schools and the national type within one compound schools under its Vision School plan so that through sharing of facilities there would be greater mixing. More recently, there was a proposal for compulsory national service in which the stated agenda was the integration of the races and inculcation of patriotism.

It is significant that the theme of national unity and nation-building has been given such attention by Dr Mahathir. With more of a reputation once as a Malay nationalist, he now sees as his legacy the attainment of a united Malaysian nation, one with a sense of common and shared destiny. He has offered a vision of a Malaysian nation. Malaysia must be, according to him, a country that is "ethnically integrated, living in harmony with full and fair partnership, made up of one *Bangsa Malaysia*,

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with political loyalty and dedication to the nation". In 1991 when outlining the nine challenges that Malaysia has to overcome to achieve developed nation status by the year 2020 he referred again to a *Bangsa Malaysia*. Mahathir urged the people to strive for a nation where there is full development in the economy, social justice, political stability, democratic system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride, and confidence.[5]

Recent public debates in Malaysia suggest that there are still divergent views of what *Bangsa Malaysia* is and the direction nation-building should take. Two issues of controversy over the last few months highlight these different perspectives. The first is the declaration on 29 September 2002 by Dr Mahathir that Malaysia is already an Islamic state. This comes in a context of the continuing push by PAS for the establishment of an Islamic state. For non-Malays and even some Malays, an Islamic state causes deep concern because they see undesirable ramifications to the process of nation-building. An Islamic state would challenge not only the existing constitution and the judiciary but also the political status of citizens of different religious affiliations. The issue therefore introduces a new dimension to the debate on nation-building.

The second controversial issue was the move to use English in the teaching of science and mathematics. This is a modified programme to an earlier idea of Dr Mahathir to re-introduce English-medium secondary schools as a step towards making Malaysia competitive in a globalizing economy. Still others, particularly educationists, saw this as progressing towards a more integrated curriculum and school system. But Chinese educationist groups, on the other hand, fear that the use of English would undermine the character of Chinese-language primary schools and erode the multi-cultural basis of Malaysia.[6] Government leaders especially from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), however, rejected the protests of the Chinese educationists. To them, if exceptions were to be made to Chinese schools, how were they to justify to the Malays that the change was necessary to improve the standard of English for the good of the nation?

In looking at the continuing debate on integration and nation-building, this chapter explores the position of the non-Malays,

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particularly that of the Chinese against the background of recent events and development. If Malaysia is today presented as an example of a tolerant, moderate, multiracial nation, it is as much the responses and behaviour of the different communities as that of government initiatives. The role of non-Malays in shaping the course of nation-building merits some attention. On integration and nation-building, the Chinese place great hope for a nation to be premised on the inter-ethnic character of society. But this represents one perspective. There are others who desire a common socialization process for all groups. The route towards consensus and accommodation in the debate is not always easy as the recent controversies in education show. The dynamics of this shifting initiatives and response of all sides are also shaped by outside events. In the recent period, the two most important events are unquestionably the 1997/98 Asian financial crisis and the World Trade Center attack of 11 September 2002. Their broad impact on the politics and economy of the country continues to be felt.

Dr Mahathir and the Inter-Ethnic Balance

When Dr Mahathir took over as leader of UMNO in 1981 he was still viewed by non-Malays as an ultra-nationalist. It was an image he gained in the 1960s when he was considered part of a group of young Turks within UMNO that was critical of the leadership. He circulated an open letter in 1969 criticizing Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister, for granting what he considered as too many concessions to the Chinese and for this act was expelled from the party in 1970. Later, Dr Mahathir was one of those UMNO leaders pushing strongly for affirmative action through the National Economic Policy and National Education Policy to help the Malays. He returned to the party in 1971.

Nevertheless, on becoming Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir came to earn the respect of many Chinese. Chinese groups soon saw him as business-friendly and as a leader creating more conducive conditions for economic development. They may initially be uneasy with some of the strategies adopted under his administration that limited their scope of expansion. In particular Dr Mahathir and his administration pursued strong affirmative actions to create a new Malay corporate class.

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Nevertheless, many Chinese were still able to progress in sectors where NEP (New Economic Policy) requirements and regulations had yet to be fully applied.

The NEP required a statutory level of Malay equity and management participation. Inter-ethnic businesses were therefore formed to comply with governmental requirements as well as to qualify for contracts. At the corporate level, many boards of directors and management today are multi-ethnic. Overall, this has proved to be a significant basis upon which some mutually beneficial collaborations between Malay and non-Malay businessmen have developed. It has also been said that increased Malay participation in the business and public sectors through NEP policies and a continued role in business of the non-Malays have contributed to a maintenance of social stability.

In the mid-1980s during the recession, Dr Mahathir relaxed some aspects of the NEP. Subsequent to that, there have also been a liberalizing of business rules in response to the increased competition in international trade and investments, and Chinese business groups managed to reap some benefit from this. The expansion of ties with China created further business opportunities for both Malays and Chinese.

On matters of education and culture, which are the bedrock of Chinese concern, the community is very positive towards Dr Mahathir. The Mahathir administration has allowed the setting up of private colleges and also approved twinning programmes with foreign universities. These have opened up more opportunities for higher education at home to the non-Malays. Lack of higher educational opportunities had been a major source of non-Malay grievance in the past. But today, higher education is accessible and affordable to many more Malaysians.

And while Dr Mahathir paid more attention to opening economic opportunities in China for Malaysians, Anwar Ibrahim as his deputy saw the relevance of China's cultural heritage to Malaysia. Hence on his trip to China, he visited the tomb of Zheng He, the Chinese Muslim who led the Ming naval expeditions to Southeast Asia, and the birthplace of Confucius. These actions as well as policies of Dr Mahathir made a deep and favourable impression on the Chinese. Public display of Chinese cultural symbols, previously discouraged, are now in evidence, and state

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and commercial television stations air popular Cantonese soap operas. In opening the Second World Hokkien Association Meeting in 1996, Dr Mahathir declared that remembering one's roots was not in conflict with one's loyalty to Malaysia.

With ten years of unprecedented high economic growth, the ruling coalition led by Dr Mahathir went confidently into the 1995 general election, which has been described as Dr Mahathir's triumph. Non-Malay Barisan Nasional (BN) parties, which did extremely well, campaigned largely on the strength of Dr Mahathir and the achievements of his administration.[7] Mahathir's articulation of Wawasan 2020 with its promise of creating a *Bangsa Malaysia* gave assurance to non-Malays that the government was determined to achieve integration within a multicultural context. And the celebration of Gongxi Raya for two years in succession seemed to symbolize the tension-free inter-ethnic relations. And within UMNO, the party that dominates the BN, the leadership of Dr Mahathir seemed unchallenged. His deputy, Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, appeared secure as deputy president and confirmed as deputy prime minister and the expectation was that the transition of power, when the time came, would be smooth. And so at different levels and at various sectors, the outlook was encouraging and stable for Malaysia. The outlook was so positive that in July and August of 1997 Dr Mahathir felt confident enough to pass on the acting prime ministership to Anwar Ibrahim and went overseas on a working holiday.

Dr Mahathir's recent assessment in October 2002 of improved inter-ethnic relations could also have been drawn from his experience of a close working relationship within his cabinet, which is made up of leaders from the different component parties. It is worth noting that when Dr Mahathir Mohamed retired in October 2003 he would be one of Asia's longest serving prime minister, and the present set of inter-ethnic leaders represents the most durable of coalitions of its kind anywhere in the world. Datuk Samy Vellu took over as president of the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) in 1980, Dr Lim Keng Yaik was elected president of the essentially Chinese-based Parti Gerakan in 1982, while Dato Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik succeeded as president of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in 1986. Leo Moggie of the PBDS and Taib Mahmud (now Sarawak Chief Minister but previously was in the cabinet) are also

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part of this lasting ruling élite. The personal relationship developed between Dr Mahathir and his coalition partners is an important element of élite cohesion in Malaysia. It has been a mechanism to resolve difficult and controversial issues affecting the different communities. It is also this co-operation that has helped maintain the power of the BN. On the other hand, critics would suggest that this élite cohesion is more a result of the dominance of Dr Mahathir within the coalition and there is an absence of parity of power in the relationship which was at least apparent during the Tengku's period.

The 1999 General Election

Yet by November 1999 when the 10th general election was held, the political situation had changed dramatically. If the 1995 elections could be said to have been campaigned on Dr Mahathir's strong standing in the country, the 1999 polls was one where much of the opposition's attack was directed at his leadership and his expulsion of his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Dr Mahathir's own reputation had suffered as a result both from the 1997–98 financial crisis and from the handling of Anwar's subsequent challenge. While it was the achievements of the Mahathir administration that helped the Chinese-based parties in the BN coalition during the 1995 elections, observers believed that in 1999 the support of Chinese voters was important to Dr Mahathir's BN win.

Some observers likened the 1997–98 events to previous factional crises in UMNO. In all the cases, personality differences and competition for power in the party were elements present. In the 1998 crisis there was also policy disagreement between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister on how to cope with the Asian financial crisis. A major point of divergence in their views had to do with the problem of a growing number of debt-ridden corporations. Here some observers believed that each faction was anxious to protect the business interests of its supporters. There was a concern particularly by Dr Mahathir that accepting the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which Anwar supported, could result in the collapse of many Malaysian companies or leave many others vulnerable to foreign takeovers. This, in particular, would erode the gains made by the Malay corporate class under the

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NEP. Such an outcome was politically unacceptable to Dr Mahathir, which would make his position in UMNO untenable.

There are subsequently several other features that distinguish the political crisis in 1998 from past factional fights. In the 1998 episode, the Anwar faction staged a populist challenge through mobilizing mass support outside of the party. Huge gatherings and later street demonstrations were held by supporters of the Anwar faction. The choice of a populist course by the reformists was not totally unexpected. Anwar had been a student activist and had led demonstrations during the Baling incident in 1974. And unable to fight from within the party after being removed as Deputy Prime Minister, he and his supporters took to rallying around the country against UMNO.

Secondly, the Anwar issue has polarized Malay society in a way previous factional fights had not. The perceived harsh treatment Anwar suffered and the participation of the Anwar family won his faction considerable support. Malay society appears more divided than at any time in the past. The deep split within UMNO led to a serious erosion of Malay support for the party.

Thirdly, more than at any other time in Malaysian political history, the division between those calling for more democratic space, justice for all, and greater transparency in government on one side and those who emphasize political stability and order has become sharper and more evident. Supporters of Anwar, referred to as the *reformasi* group, called for radical change particularly in the political and judiciary systems. These, rather than ethnic issues, became the rallying cry.

After a hard campaign at the 1999 general election, the BN retained power but barely managed to gain a two-thirds majority. The BN won 148 seats out of a total of 193 seats, a loss of thirteen seats compared with the election in 1995. It failed to win back Kelantan and in fact lost the state government of Terengganu to PAS. The BN also lost ground to PAS in several other states, particularly Kedah, Perlis, and Pahang, and only in Johor did it hold firm. UMNO suffered electoral reverses it had not experienced for a long time. It lost sixteen parliamentary and fifty-five state seats throughout the country. Four of its ministers and five deputy ministers were defeated in the elections. Although UMNO won seventy-two parliamentary seats (compared with ninety-four in 1995) it

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did not, for the first time, obtain a clear majority of votes at the parliamentary and state levels.[8]

The party that gained most from the 1999 elections was PAS. It obtained 43.5 per cent of total Malay votes and won twenty-seven parliamentary seats, one of the largest number in its history. By virtue of this, the position of parliamentary opposition leader went to PAS for the first time. The party did very well in the urban strongholds of the Federal Territory and Penang and lost only very narrowly in seats contested there. In state level elections it won two states, Kelantan and Terengganu. In several other states, it made deep inroads into what were strong UMNO states.

The other significant outcome of the 1999 elections was that a majority of non-Malay votes went largely to the BN. For the first time in Malaysian electoral history, many non-Malay BN candidates won largely on non-Malay support. In the past, MCA or Gerakan candidates had to depend on Malay votes to balance a majority of non-Malay votes which went to opposition candidates such as the Democratic Action Party (DAP). The MCA won twenty-eight seats; Gerakan, seven; and the MIC, seven. The BN parties in Sabah and Sarawak took thirty-three seats. Just as significant was the number of non-Malay votes in closely contested Malay seats. Non-Malay votes were believed to have been crucial in helping a number of UMNO candidates win.

Two factors swung Chinese votes behind the BN. The first of these was the issue of order and stability. In a situation of uncertainty following the 1997 Asian financial crisis and political turmoil in neighbouring countries, the majority of the Chinese did not contemplate any alternative other than the incumbent administration. They were familiar with the style and the policies of Dr Mahathir. The violence and the economic problems in Indonesia, even though circumstances were different, worried the Malaysian Chinese. Secondly, many Chinese rejected the link between the DAP and PAS. Both parties together with the newly formed Parti KeADILan, consisting mainly of supporters and sympathizers of Anwar, and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, established an electoral understanding to contest as Barisan Alternatif (BA) against the BN. The Chinese were cautious towards the BA because they were worried about PAS' stated aim of establishing an Islamic state on coming to power.

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The Chinese community had been attentive to the Anwar crisis almost as closely as the Malays did. Here was the man whom many Chinese had come to expect to be prime minister in the near future. In past factional fights within UMNO the Chinese were careful to avoid taking sides publicly for fear of being construed as interfering. On this occasion, supporters of UMNO and Anwar openly called on non-Malay support. In the end the majority of the Chinese backed Dr Mahathir and UMNO. But there were a significant number of younger Chinese, professionals, and some intellectuals who were sympathetic to the *reformasi* movement. The *reformasi* movement had broadened its appeal beyond the sacking and detention of Anwar. It now engaged the public on issues of justice, human rights, corruption, the Internal Security Act, a free press, and on more democratic space. These were issues that attracted the younger Chinese. These Chinese saw the congruence of their own expectations of justice and equality with what the *reformasi* people were fighting for. In the elections, the BA, an alliance of opposition parties, offered a vision of a new political programme where politics in the new millennium would be defined less by race and religion, and where class interests would encourage Malays and non-Malays to abandon ethnic allegiances and vote across ethnic lines.

Reformasi supporters and critics of the BN maintain that the politicization of ethnicity has undermined democratic institutions and practices in Malaysia, and has led to a further consolidation of an élite class of bourgeoise interests centred around BN leaders and their select clienteles, particularly in UMNO. They contend that the BN leaders have continued the art of "divide and rule", learnt from the departed British colonialists to maintain their grip on power ever since the BN's predecessor, the Alliance coalition, won the first general election in Malaya in 1955.

In the 1999 elections, the DAP was, from the non-Malay point of view, the chief casualty. But in fact the party captured slightly more popular votes than in the previous election and won ten seats. However, it failed to take Penang state, and Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh, two of the party's leaders, were defeated on the island state. Lim could not persuade the Chinese that there was no fear of a possible Islamic state because the BA could not assume federal power even if it won most of

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the seats contested. For the Chinese, a weakened DAP has resulted in a less robust non-Malay opposition.[9]

The Election Results and Implications on Inter-Ethnic Balance

The 1999 election results showed a weakened UMNO, and some observers anticipated some immediate impact on inter-ethnic politics in the country. It had been noted in the past that when the ruling faction of UMNO or the party was under serious challenge, the instinct of the leadership was to move towards a more authoritarian approach and a more ethnic emphasis in its agenda. This was the case in 1987 when ethnic tension over the issue of education was used as a reason for the government to detain over a hundred political activists under Operation Lallang. Operation Lallang took place at a time when Dr Mahathir was under serious challenge from Tengku Razaleigh for the party's leadership. The unease of the non-Malays immediately after the 1999 elections was that UMNO, having suffered electoral losses, might be tempted to take a more Malay or Islamic stance to win back support. Should this happen, then inter-ethnic relations both within the BN and in the wider society could be at risk.

But factionalism or a Malay split fought out not at party level but at the broad electoral level offer some positive possibilities in inter-ethnic relations. To win non-Malay support in closely contested seats, Malay contending factions or competing parties cannot take too communal a stand. In 1990, a faction from UMNO left to form Semangat 46. The new party began to forge an inter-ethnic opposition coalition. It then challenged UMNO and in this situation non-Malay votes became crucial. In the Johor Baru parliamentary by-election, Semangat 46 defeated UMNO. But Chinese votes helped the UMNO candidate of BN defeat Semangat 46 in Parti Raja. This stemmed the momentum of Semangat 46's campaign and turned the political tide in favour of UMNO.

However, for non-Malays to have a convincing role in deciding the outcome of close electoral contests in predominantly Malay constituencies, there must also be a credible non-Malay opposition. This was the case in 1990 when there was a relatively strong DAP which appeared likely to swing non-Malay votes to Semangat 46. Since then,

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however, non-Malay parliamentary opposition strength is weakened and this was reflected in the poor performance of the DAP in the 1999 elections. For the first time Malay opposition representation is larger than that of the non-Malays. The DAP won ten seats while PAS gained twenty-six. And for the first time the opposition leader in Parliament is a Malay. Perhaps more seriously for the non-Malays, Mr Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh, two of the most experienced and vocal parliamentarians to articulate non-Malay concerns, were defeated in the elections and are no longer in any representative bodies.

Both PAS and UMNO, while focusing their attention on the Malays, still regard non-Malay support as pivotal in elections. It could be argued that UMNO and PAS are encountering a new and relatively unfamiliar experience in the present shifting political mood especially within the Malay electorate. This is illustrated by the case of the new PAS state government in Terengganu, which on taking office, floated the idea of a new Islamic-based tax on non-Malays known as *kharaj*. There was strong negative reaction from the non-Malays, and the DAP itself opposed the idea. The proposal was dropped. Since then, PAS has sought to engage non-Malays in dialogues. For PAS to be a truly national party in the new future it has to win over enough Chinese and Indian votes. It may not drop the Islamic state objective but might accommodate some non-Malay interests such as approving land for temples and Chinese schools. PAS probably calculates that the momentum of Malay support is with the party and it could afford to make such concessions without fear of any backlash against it from the Malay community.

UMNO has a more daunting task in working out a new and effective strategy to regain dominant influence. In seeking to revitalize itself it may choose to re-emphasize its role as protector of the Malays. This was a role that UMNO first assumed when it was formed. It may be tempted to take a more pro-Malay line with greater Malay stress in government policies. The risk, however, is that this might alienate the non-Malays. But some within the party might feel that it is more vital to win back the Malays. Non-Malay support, it could be argued, is expendable for the moment. And the assumption is that Chinese apprehension of an Islamic state under PAS would sway them to vote BN anyway.

It was this post-election environment that statements by Dato David

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Chua and *Suqiu* created some ethnic tension. David Chua, the deputy chairman of the Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, gave an interview to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in August 2000 in which he was asked to comment on the general economic situation in the country. David Chua was then also deputy chairman of the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC). The NECC was at that point preparing a prospective ten-year plan for the economic and social development of Malaysia. Chua was quoted by the *Review* as calling for greater competitiveness in Malaysia to help drive the country's economic recovery in the face of growing globalization. To be competitive, quotas in certain sectors of the economy and public services need to be reviewed. Chua's interview was covered on the front page in *Utusan Malaysia* and his comments were construed as an attack on Malay special rights. Chua was also accused of breaching confidentiality by commenting on a matter that was still before the NECC. For days, the press played up the story of Chua and his *Review* comments.

At about this time, *Suqui*, the Malaysian Chinese Organizations' Election Appeal Committee, which is made up of thirteen organizations and which claims to have the endorsement of over 2,000 Chinese associations in the country, chose to mark the anniversary of its submitting of a seventeen-point appeal for the 1999 general elections. The setting up of *Suqiu* was led largely by the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall and Dong Jiao Zong. Both, particularly the latter, are in the forefront of defending Chinese education and other issues of concern to the community. A number of those in *Suqiu* are also said to be sympathetic to the *reformasi* movement. The call for justice by the *reformasi* group and the new party, Parti KeADILan, was a political cause they could support and identify with. For the *Suqiu* supporters, justice sought by the *reformasi* should be expanded to include the rights and equality of all cultures and language in the country. Just before the 1999 elections, *Suqiu* submitted a memorandum which it made public, appealing for change and reforms. Among the points raised was the call to promote national unity, to advance democracy, uphold human rights and justice, curb corruption, to have a fair and equitable economic policy, and to allow the flourishing of multi-ethnic cultures. It referred to protecting the Malaysian environment, modernizing the New Villages, housing

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for all, and to provide for the *orang asli*. On calling for the promotion of national unity, which was the first of its appeals it wanted steps to be taken to abolish all aspects of the *bumiputera* versus non-*bumiputera* distinction. The memorandum received considerable publicity and at the time of the 1999 elections both the opposition and the BN accepted in principle the points it contained.[10]

The comments of David Chua and *Suqiu* seemed quite innocuous to many when they first appeared. Some of the points they raised had in fact been brought up by Dr Mahathir and some UMNO leaders in their address to young Malays. Dr Mahathir had urged young Malays to be more competitive and not to expect continued government support and privileges. But while Malay leaders could criticize aspects of the NEP, it was something else altogether for non-Malays to bring up what would be considered as a sensitive subject in public. And so in a situation where some in UMNO were seeking strategies to regain election losses, the David Chua–*Suqiu* statements were seen as timely to be used to rally Malay nationalist sentiments. The Malay press took the lead to attack David Chua and *Suqiu* and this was taken up immediately by UMNO Youth.

UMNO Youth in particular took exceptions to *Suqiu*'s call for the ending of the *bumiputera* versus non-*bumiputera* distinction. And despite attempts by David Chua to explain that some of his statements were distorted by the Malay press, the controversy did not go away. There was a small gathering in Putrajaya, the new administrative capital, to demonstrate against David Chua and *Suqiu*, and a delegation met Dr Mahathir. A group of UMNO Youth members then threatened to burn down the Selangor Chinese Hall premises. Other Malay organizations joined in to counter the *Suqiu* statements with their own memoranda of demands.

Dr Mahathir himself came out strongly against *Suqiu*. He described the group as extremists and that its demands could stir up racial sentiments. He labelled *Suqiu* as a body similar to that of the Al Maunah, a small armed Islamic group which had seized weapons from a territorial army camp in Perak and which had been portrayed as posing a serious security threat to the nation.[11]

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Defusing the David Chua–*Suqiu* Controversy

The attack on David Chua and *Suqiu* disturbed wide sections of the Chinese community. Many in the Chinese community felt that the attack on David Chua and *Suqiu* was way out of proportion to the supposed offence, especially as *Suqiu*'s memorandum had been published in the previous year without having invited any objections. There was disquiet that so soon after the strong support given to the BN by the Chinese in the previous year's elections, there should be those within UMNO willing to take an ethnic position at the risk of inter-communal harmony. Such sentiments among the Chinese soon were expressed electorally. In the Lunas by-elections a few months later in November 2000, Chinese votes helped the Parti KeADILan candidate to defeat the BN candidate in the latter's stronghold in Kedah.

Overall, Malay hostile reaction to the David Chua–*Suqiu* statements was not widespread. In fact, sections of PAS and the *reformasi* Malay groups offered to defend the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall should UMNO Youth attempt to burn it down. Many Malays, it has been suggested, did not see the David Chua–*Suqiu* as a real issue and that what concerned them more was Anwar and the *reformasi* movement. The Anwar issue still dominated their political consciousness.

This sentiment together with the Lunas results must have caused a re-think among those in UMNO who thought that an ethnic approach would swiftly help recover Malay support for the party. Clearly, a nationalist line this time did not strike a popular chord. Achievements in the NEP has created a more confident Malay community both in the area of politics and economics. The sense of pre-1969 insecurity has been greatly lessened and so a communal call does not evoke the same degree of political response as in the past. There has therefore emerged a new generation of Malaysians from all communities who are willing to question ethnic-based politics. In a way, this reflects the success of government efforts in inculcating a greater sense of being Malaysian through its educational system. Younger Malaysians in seeking to play a meaningful part in society now tend to reject ethnic approaches and are instead inspired by new and more universalistic ideals. Issues of human rights, justice, democracy, and freedom have become the rallying calls.

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And for many of the young, the Anwar episode has been turned into a symbol for these values.

There is also the Internet and satellite television. A broad range of news and information is accessible speedily and more easily than before. Alternative views and opinions reach large audiences within the country through the Internet and fax machines. Where news could previously be controlled by managing the mainstream media, this is no longer possible today. Opposition groups have developed new delivery means to put across their messages. In addition, satellite television such as CNN and CNBC grant access to opposition leaders. On the David Chua–*Suqiu* episode, critical Malays posted commentaries on various websites to reject what they viewed as a clumsy attempt by UMNO to regain Malay support.

In the end, David Chua met Dr Mahathir to explain his part in the *Review* interview. *Suqiu* also accepted the invitation to hold discussions with UMNO Youth and agreed to withdraw items in the election list deemed offensive. Within the BN there were those who realized that the David Chua–*Suqiu* controversy could lead to inter-ethnic tension that will harm the country's efforts at economic recovery, and they therefore helped work out a resolution with *Suqiu*. Already foreign direct investment had declined sharply over the last two years and any indication of instability would further discourage the inflow of much needed foreign funds.

Indeed, the government had steered a steady economic recovery. Dr Mahathir, in particular, emerged vindicated for taking a number of measures, some of which were controversial at the time. These included introducing capital controls, helping to recapitalize banks, easing of monetary policies, setting up a National Economic Action Council, and establishing a Corporate Debt Restructuring Committee. At the same time, there was acknowledgement that the recovery was possible because of private sector role and non-Malay support. In fact, in facing what government leaders saw as an external attack on the currency and economy of the country, rallying inter-ethnic support and unity assumed greater relevance and even urgency. The MCA itself embarked on a nation-wide "Love Malaysia Buy Malaysia" campaign to urge Malaysian Chinese to support local products and services.

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A sector that helped drive the recovery of the Malaysian economy was manufacturing, where the private sector and non-Malays have a significant part. At the time of the financial crisis, manufacturing contributed 34.4 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), 82.9 per cent of total exports, and 27 per cent of employment in 1998. Local small and medium-size enterprises, of which some 80 to 90 per cent are Chinese, produced a significant share for the domestic and export markets. The important role of Chinese small and medium-size industries (SMIs) was also their linkages to large-scale industries. These SMIs manufacture component parts for local and multinational companies. Intel, Matsushita, and Sony, for instance, source their component parts from local SMIs. Just as important, the SMIs produce for foreign companies under the original equipment manufacture (OEM) arrangement.

A report carried out by a private research group suggested that many Chinese SMIs were certainly badly hit by the 1997 financial crisis. But a significant number survived the impact of the crisis. This was because many of them were not exposed to borrowings which was a major factor for the collapse of many businesses. Chinese SMIs escaped the debt problem because they were unable generally to get banks loans and had to rely on their own sources of funds. There were two other contributing factors that shielded the SMIs.[12] The pegging of 3.80 Malaysian ringgit to the U.S. dollar in effect undervalued the Malaysian currency. This benefited Malaysian exporters whose products were now more competitive. Secondly, the SMIs that did particularly well were those that did not have to import raw materials but relied on local resources such as rubber and wood. Finally, the continued political and economic uncertainties in Indonesia had led to some foreign companies at the height of the crisis to shift their operations to Malaysian SMIs.

Bigger Chinese businesses were likewise badly affected by the financial crisis. But the better established companies survived and had a part in helping the economic recovery. Engaged in producing goods and services, these companies managed to maintain profitability despite the economic slowdown, as their businesses were generally in sectors that were less vulnerable to the financial crisis. Some were in plantation,

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and palm oil were fetching high prices at the time. Others were in export manufacturing. Most of them also concentrated on their core business and survived through prudent management. Through this they avoided the burden of crippling heavy debts. Finally, a number of the successful business groups had diversified their interests abroad. They were therefore not as exposed during the financial crisis when there was a currency devaluation in Malaysia.

The MCA Split

Observers thought that with UMNO having internal and electoral problems, the Chinese-based parties, particularly the MCA, could be in a position to have a slightly more influential say within the ruling coalition. But this was not to be. After their credible electoral performance Chinese leaders adopted a modest and cautious profile. They assured UMNO leaders that even though their parties had done well they would not demand more cabinet or government positions. Only in Penang did the MCA make a bid for the chief ministership position. Following two defections to the party from Gerakan, the MCA had the most state assemblymen. But its bid was made against another Chinese-based party.

Within the MCA, the largest of the Chinese-based parties and which claims to represent the Chinese in Malaysia, the position of Dato Seri Ling Liong Sik appeared secure. The MCA had performed relatively well in the 1999 polls. And soon afterwards Ling retained the president's post unchallenged. The party seemed united especially when the entire central committee was returned unopposed. However, in May 2000, Ling made a surprise announcement that he was resigning from the cabinet but would retain his presidency.

It was clear that with the national elections over and MCA seemingly unchallenged by other non-Malay parties, dissidents within the party were ready to come out into the open. It was the deputy president, Dato Lim Ah Lek, who led a challenge against Ling. Ling was accused of not honouring an agreement with Lim that required both to retire and allow younger leaders to take over. Lim's choice was Chan Kong Choy while Ong Kah Ting was Ling's protégé. Ling's position was further hurt by speculations surrounding the business deals of his son with businessman

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Soh Chee Wen. Supporters of a former leader, Datuk Lee Kim Sai, a Ling rival in the past, rallied to Lim's side.

Ling was rated as a competent Minister of Transport. During the financial crisis in 1997/98 he led the MCA and others to rally behind Dr Mahathir and the government. The MCA launched a "Love Malaysia Buy Malaysia" campaign throughout the country in 1998. It was a display of economic patriotism while at the same time serving to provide a boost to local industries in the difficult economic circumstances. The Chinese were mindful of the situation in neighbouring Indonesia. Together with Ling, Chinese chambers of commerce pledged support to assist in the economic recovery.

To deal with the continued challenge of Team B, Ling moved to take over two influential Chinese newspapers, *Nanyang Siang Pau* and the *China Press*. The purchase was unpopular with the Chinese. It was seen as an attempt by the government through the MCA to further domesticate the Chinese press. Editorials in the Chinese press are relatively more independent compared with the Malay- and English-language newspapers and they give more attention to issues affecting the Chinese. Some interpreted the purchase as a move by the Ling faction to shut out its opponents and for the government to have complete control of the Chinese media for the next elections. The purchase led to a boycott by various Chinese organizations of the two newspapers.

Within UMNO there were mixed assessments over the split in the MCA. Some might have taken satisfaction that in the light of UMNO's electoral and internal problems, it might just as well be that the MCA was similarly embroiled in its own party difficulties. On the other hand, this weakening of the MCA could reduce its effectiveness at election time. Both MCA factions had their supporters within UMNO. Lim, in particular, was preferred by those who saw his Pahang base of support crucial to UMNO in the coming elections against PAS since Chinese votes there could be crucial. Ling, on the other hand, was the incumbent and received a political boost when the Education Ministry approved the setting up of a private university. Called Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), the university was what many Chinese had long hoped for. To the Chinese then, this was an important gesture from the government.

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Islamic State

Even without the MCA split, it was unlikely that the Chinese-based parties could have obtained too many concessions from UMNO in the immediate post-1999 election period. UMNO had too many demands to satisfy. Then came the events of September 11 World Trade Center attack and the subsequent American action against Afghanistan. These had major ramifications on Malaysia and its politics. They have, in particular, possible implications on the position of the non-Malays. Indeed, on 29 September at the annual general meeting of Parti Gerakan, Dr Mahathir made a surprising declaration that Malaysia is an Islamic state. In the post–September 11 atmosphere and with an impending U.S. attack on Afghanistan, Dr Mahathir's declaration was clearly an attempt to seize the Islamic initiative by presenting UMNO as the promoter of an authentic Islamic state rather than PAS. Political sentiments were very strong within Muslim communities throughout the world following September 11, and UMNO feared that PAS would be the principal beneficiary of those feelings.

The Islamic state declaration of Dr Mahathir was not convincing to the more Islamic groups. PAS challenged UMNO to implement fully the Islamic state. Tun Salleh Abas, the former Lord President and now a Terengganu PAS state assemblyman, contended that the country was still a secular nation and the existing constitution does not provide for an Islamic state. As Lord President in 1988, he had made a ruling along this line during a hearing when a defence lawyer claimed trial for his client under the *syariah* or Islamic law.

Non-Malays were taken aback by the Prime Minister's declaration since the BN had in the 1999 election campaign attacked the DAP for its association with PAS and PAS' Islamic state proposal. Many of the non-Malays had in fact voted against the DAP because of its PAS' links. But following September 11 and PAS' alleged connection with feared militant Islam, there appeared little choice for non-Malays but to continue supporting Dr Mahathir despite his declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic state. Dr Mahathir assured non-Malays that his Islamic state requires no change to the constitution since the country already manifests all the features of an Islamic state. The safeguards for non-Muslims

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remain. Dr Mahathir's assurance that the political system and the constitution of the country remain unchanged was accepted by the MCA and Parti Gerakan.[13]

Lim Kit Siang, on the other hand, considered Dr Mahathir's declaration:

> … a tectonic shift in Malaysian politics where the undisputed constitutional and nation-building principle for forty-four years of Malaysia as a democratic, secular and multi-religious nation has been abandoned by the fourteen parties in the Barisan Nasional.

To him, Malaysia as a secular state had been safeguarded by the Reid Constitution Report of 1957, the Federal Constitution 1957, and the government White Paper on the Federation of Malaya Constitution Proposals 1957. The Cobbold Commission Report of 1962 had also assured Sarawak and Sabah that the Federal Constitution provides for a secular state. Lim feared that the focus of political debate and nation-building has completely shifted, and that it is now left almost entirely to UMNO and PAS to argue over the type of Islamic state the nation should become.

Both PAS and UMNO have yet to provide details of the Islamic state they want. The form and nature of such a state have serious implications on whether non-Muslim Malaysians will have an equal and rightful role in the nation-building process. Whereas sections within Malay nationalism had been able to broaden the movement to argue for a more inclusivist, and therefore a Malaysian, nationalism, an Islamic state in Malaysia could be exclusionist. Proponents of an Islamic state generally insist that at the foundation of an Islamic state is the *syariah* to which non-Muslims are excluded.[14]

The English Language Issue and Chinese Schools

In the sometimes unpredictable course of Malaysian politics, the controversy involving Chinese schools arose following a move to introduce English in the teaching of science and mathematics. On 4 May 2002, Dr Mahathir expressed concern at the high number of unemployed graduates. The Human Resource Ministry gave a figure of some 44,000. An estimated 94 per cent of them were Malays and, according to the Prime Minister, most of them held degrees in Arts and

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Islamic studies. He also added that the reason those graduates had difficulties finding jobs was because they lacked proficiency in English. Dr Mahathir proceeded to speak of the need to give more attention to English in schools and universities. Arguing further that Malaysians must have English to compete in the international market, Dr Mahathir floated the idea of re-introducing English-medium schools. But he left the decision to UMNO.[15]

As expected, the idea of returning to English-medium schools was rejected by the party. The UMNO Supreme Council pointed out that the move would be contrary to the National Education Policy. As a compromise it proposed that English be used in the teaching of science and mathematics. The Education Ministry subsequently announced that with effect from 2003, a change along the lines proposed would be implemented beginning from the first year of primary and secondary schools.[16]

There were strong reservations among many groups to the proposed use of English in the teaching of science and mathematics. These included Malay language supporters and Chinese educationists. Malay opposition came from those who see the return of English as undermining efforts to make Malay truly a language for teaching at all levels and subjects. Likewise, there were mixed responses from the Chinese. The argument of the Prime Minister on the importance of English was well accepted and many regarded re-introducing English in national schools as a right step. Yet, not a few shared the concern of Chinese educationists who insisted that using English at the primary level in science and mathematics was not the most effective method to improve a pupil's level of English. It could be particularly disadvantageous to students from Chinese schools who already were doing well in science and mathematics, and the change in the medium of instruction could have adverse results. But the real worry of the Chinese educationists was that replacing Chinese as a medium of instruction in two subjects would change the character of Chinese schools.

The controversy took a more serious turn when first Parti Gerakan and then the MCA objected to the Education Ministry's proposal on the language change.[17] Leaders of both parties understood how important the maintenance of the Chinese schools was to the Chinese community. It was one issue the Chinese-based parties felt they could not avoid but

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had to speak up on behalf of the majority of its community. Not since 1959 did the ruling coalition find itself so divided on an issue. The closest had been in 1987 over the appointment of non-Mandarin-speaking teachers as senior assistants in Chinese schools. On all three occasions, the status of the Chinese schools was the issue of contention.

As the controversy dragged on, it became clear that the original concern of declining English language standard had moved to the broader question of the status of national-type schools and the process of nation-building. Mass media editorials and commentaries labelled Chinese educationists as chauvinists and exclusionists. This came out more strongly in the Malay-language press such as *Utusan Malaysia*, but similar comments on the issue also appeared in the English-language newspapers. Malay media and political leaders also criticized both the Gerakan and the MCA for not fully supporting a policy decided by the government and that they were weak-kneed in the face of the intransigence of the Chinese educationists.

The English language issue is also linked to the opposition by some Chinese educationists to the Vision School proposal. The Vision School programme, first mooted by Dr Mahathir and announced in August 1995 by then Education Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, is a concept that will see a cluster of three schools (national, Chinese, and Tamil) sharing common premises and facilities but maintaining their separate administration and medium of instruction. The students would have co-curricular activities jointly. In announcing the programme, Najib said the aim of the programme was to "enhance unity and co-operation among the races and bring about a truly united nation". Chinese educationists, however, publicly expressed their anxiety that the Vision School is another attempt to erode the character of the Chinese schools.

The expectations of a community and the demands of a nation remain central in this controversy of introducing English for the teaching of science and mathematics. Tan Liok Ee in her study, *The Rhetoric of Bangsa and Minzu*, traced how early Malay and Chinese political groups sought to define the Malaysian nation through terms used in their languages for community and community rights.[18] She argued that it is *bangsa* and *minzu* that impose themselves on *negara* and that their rhetoric were consciously developed to assert (in the case of *bangsa*) or

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resist (in the case of *minzu*) dominance in the process of defining the claims of *negara* on citizens. On one side were those who insisted that *bangsa*, which has *Melayu* as its core, should define the nation. On the other side, the *minzu* emphasizes the equal status of community within a nation. Chinese educationists find that the right to maintaining mother tongue education has always come up against what has been presented as the larger claim of national interest.

But there are differences in this current debate on the use of English. Firstly, it is not one where the Chinese are resisting the features of *bangsa* and its Malayness. National interest is now presented not entirely along *bangsa* lines but as that of introducing the use of English in the education system and improving the standard of the language.

As such, the debate does not appear to divide so sharply the main communities. While Malay political leaders are pushing for the use of English there are significant segments of Malays who have reservations about the new language directive. And there are Chinese who support the Education Ministry decision because they consider increasing the use of English as a desirable and practical move.

The second point to note is that Chinese schools are no longer simply symbols of Chinese chauvinism but that they have gained broad appeal in the community for reasons of educational quality. Communal sentiments probably persist but these now rank lower than other consideration in this growing preference for Chinese schools. Support for Chinese schools come not only from Chinese educationists but also from many English-educated Chinese. It is estimated that some 70 per cent of Chinese parents send their children to Chinese schools, and a significant number of these are English-educated Chinese. Enrolment in the 1,285 Chinese primary schools in 2001 is given as 616,402 and the figure is growing. This is out of a total of 2.9 million primary school enrolment. The attraction of Chinese schools is their reputation for discipline and quality of teaching compared with those of the national schools. It is also generally accepted that subjects such as science and mathematics are better taught in Chinese schools. Students also acquire a degree of fluency in an additional language, and with China emerging to be an economic power, learning Chinese is seen as an asset for international trade and business.

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Furthermore, as Chinese educationists argue, there are some 50,000 Malay students enrolled in Chinese schools. The parents of these Malay students are attracted to Chinese schools for very much the same reasons as those of English-educated Chinese parents. Chinese educationists therefore maintain that the Chinese school stream is not exclusionist, as has been suggested

The English language issue was eventually resolved within the BN. In what has been described as a compromise, Chinese schools will have four periods of English for mathematics and three for science. Chinese (Mandarin) would continue to be used to teach the two subjects. But there would be a reduction from fifteen to twelve periods for the teaching of Chinese.[19] It is this reduction that prompts the Chinese educationists to reject the compromise of the BN.[20] But Chinese-based parties consider the formulae as the best arrangement they could get.

Conclusion

There is general acceptance of Mahathir's vision of an eventual *Bangsa Malaysia* despite the fact that this *Bangsa Malaysia* is not defined. All sides accept the need for integration of the various ethnic groups into one united Malaysian community. But there continues to be at least two different perspectives on how this is to be achieved. These two views are evident in recent political developments and were expressed in the issues of using English in schools and in the declaration of the Islamic state. In discussions on these issues, the lines of division remain essentially the same. As in past dynamics of inter-ethnic relations, sections within the indigenous community are determined to define the nation while those in the minority groups want a more plural character.

Recent understanding of integration and the process of nation-building reflect changes in society that have taken place over the past forty-four years of independence. It has, more than ever before, been affected by developments in the international environment. Globalization and technological transformation is forcing Malaysia to be competitive in international trade and investments. To be competitive the country has to upgrade its education system and broaden the medium in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The move to re-introduce the use of English in Malaysian schools underlines the determination of

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Malaysian leaders to accept policy change that might not be entirely popular with their constituencies but are nevertheless deemed essential in the interest of the nation and nation-building.

But developments in the international scene are also responsible for a further resurgence of Islam in Malaysia and inspiring the drive to establish an Islamic state. There is now a shift in the debate on the character of the nation-state. The debate so far has been engaged by UMNO and PAS, and the concern of the Chinese is that they are being excluded from this discussion.

So many of the recent political initiatives were derived from Dr Mahathir. Dr Mahathir is conscious of his place in history and he would want to be remembered as a prime minister who left a legacy in nation-building. Hence, in his speeches he laments the lack of inter-ethnic integration. He has set a return to the use of more English in schools. The strategy in the restructuring of the economy remains, but with globalization and the need to be internationally competitive, he has allowed discussion of the meritocracy-affirmation action options. To rectify some of the problems that he himself had referred to, there may be new policies and programmes in the coming months. There will be a re-look at the national schools to make them truly national, schools that attract all ethnic groups, and function as institutions of national integration.

NOTES

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4. Mansor Mohd Noor, "Crossing Ethnic Borders in Malaysia: Measuring the Fluidity of Ethnic Identity and Group Formation", *Akademika* 55 (July 1999): 61–62.
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7. James Chin, "The 1995 Malaysian General Elections: Mahathir's Last Triumph?" *Asian Survey* 36, no. 4 (April 1996).
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10. See http://www.suqiu.org/Suqiu_English.htm for the full text of *Suqiu* (accessed August 2000).
11. *New Straits Times*, 31 August 2002; *Star*, 31 August 2002
12. The Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia Survey Report on Economic Recovery in Malaysia for the first half of the year 2000 (Kuala Lumpur, 2000).
13. English-language newspapers generally use the term "Islamic country" when referring to what Dr Mahathir had declared.
14. K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery Cheek, "Malaysia's Islamic Movements", in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, edited by Joel S. Khan and Francis Loh Kok Wah (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992); Lee Min Choon, *Freedom of Religion in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Karios Research Centre, 2000).
15. *New Straits Times*, 5 May 2002; *Star*, 5 May 2002.
16. *New Straits Times*, 12 May 2002; *Star*, 12 May 2002.
17. *New Straits Times*, 20 October 2002.
18. Tan Liok Ee, *The Rhetoric of Bangsa and Minzu: Community and Nation in Tension, The Malay Peninsula, 1900–1955* (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988).
19. *New Straits Times*, 1 November 2002; *Star*, 2 November 2002.
20. *New Straits Times*, 12 November 2002; *Star*, 12 November 2002.

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CHAPTER 6

Texts and Collective Memories: The Construction of "Chinese" and "Chineseness" from the Perspective of a Malay

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The present chapter, I believe, is one of the few attempts in the field of Malaysian studies, especially in the sub-field of ethnic relations in Malaysia, to make a comparison as to how Malay and Chinese ethnic identities have been formed in the Malaysian context, both from authority-defined (read: texts) and everyday-defined (read: memories) perspectives. The novelty of this attempt perhaps lies in the fact that it is viewed from the objective and subjective perspective of a Malay person, namely, the author. It goes without saying that the chapter is also an invitation for a critical discourse on the theme, which to this very moment has been a source of continued contestation both in the academia and the realpolitik contexts in Malaysia. I am referring to the hot public debate being conducted in the mass media in Malaysia at present on the issue of the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English in Chinese- and Malay-medium schools.

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In the first part of this chapter, and in the subsequent second and third parts, I shall present an authority-defined perspective of the construction of the social categories "Malay" and "Malayness", as well as "Chinese" and "Chineseness". The discussion emphasizes the defining role that British colonialism had played, in particular, through its "colonial knowledge", in the construction and consolidation process of these categories, hence identities. I contend that colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, or economic wealth. It was also the result of a cultural invasion in the form of a conquest of the native epistemological space, or the dismantling of native thought system hence disempowering it of its ability to define things and subsequently replacing it with a foreign one, through a systemic application of a series of colonial investigative modalities.

As a result, I would further argue that the history of the much discussed contemporary Malay identity and Malayness as well as Chinese identity and Chineseness, which is largely a colonial-orientalist construction in the Malaysian case, reflects the identity of the overall history of Malaya and then Malaysia, one that was dominated, shaped, and "factualized", culturally, by colonial knowledge. In short, colonial knowledge has not only enabled the conquest of British Malaya and the Malays as well as the immigrant population (including the Chinese) but also was produced by it, as much as by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established colonial power in the Straits Settlements and later in the Malay states.

The second part takes a brief look at how the construction of Malay and Malayness, that is, the creation of the pillars of Malayness, namely, *bahasa, raja dan agama* (literally: language/Malay, sultan/Malay, and religion/Islam), and Chineseness, namely, education, language, and culture, came to be officialized and instituted during the colonial period within the framework of colonial knowledge informed by a mixture of Social Darwinism and colonial investigative modalities. It also examines how this process which gave rise to the modern idea of a Malay race and nation (*bangsa*) as strongly reflected in its nationalist and anti-colonial movement, and the modern idea of a Chinese race, already established in mainland China (Dikotter 1992) but embellished and localized by

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the British for its immediate ideological and materialist interests in British Malaya.

The third part examines briefly the evolution of the Chinese as a social category in Malaysia and how Chineseness emerged as a result of contestation within colonial Malaya as well as by events in mainland China in the 1920s. The critical watershed of the change in the Malaysian Chinese position *vis-à-vis* the state came after World War II and this culminated later in the central role of education in reinforcing the two central elements of Chineseness, namely, language and culture. Nonetheless, the Chinese economy became important in reinforcing Chineseness with the introduction of the affirmative New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 to redress ethnic imbalance in the economy.

The fourth part presents an everyday-defined perspective on Chinese views about the Malays and vice versa based on the author's subjective experience, or memories, and also information and memories of the author's personal friends and members of the community of Malaysian scholars. Some of the views presented have become stereotypes while others have found their way into policy documents. It is not a comprehensive coverage but it is sufficient to give us some insights into some of the "ruling memories" that informed Sino-Malay relations in Malaysia at the everyday, experiential level.

Colonial Knowledge and the Construction of Ethnic Identities

In Malaysia, it seems to be analytically convenient, almost routinized, for historians and others to accept an unproblematized "colonial knowledge", both as the basis and the accepted form of Malaysian and Malay history. This goes on despite the fact that there exists the politico-academic attempt, until today, to "indigenize" Malaysian history by privileging the native-Malay viewpoint. Indeed, it is an admired effort but the emphasis has clearly been motivated by the perceived conceptual and "cultural-nationalistic" need to re-interpret history rather than to problematize and question the construction of historical knowledge, in this case the colonial knowledge, which, in fact, is the basis of identity formation in modern Malaysia. The lack of analytical attention, especially in Malaysia, on the problematic origin, development, and nature of

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colonial knowledge has also been the result of viewpoints that have emphasized either the good or bad side of the paternalism that informed colonialism but has nothing to say about colonial knowledge (Andaya and Andaya 1982; Hirschman 1986, 1987; Cheah Boon Kheng 1997, 2002).

This deafening silence on colonial knowledge — something taken as given, or as something natural — both amongst historians and non-historians, is a cause for intellectual and ideological concern especially in the context of the present development of Malaysian studies and society. My basic concern here is clearly about the "identity of knowledge", one which has even escaped many scholars and analysts who themselves are deeply involved in the general study of (people's) identity.

For instance, in the discourse on Malay identity in Malaysia, one could argue that colonial methods of knowledge accumulation and the resultant corpus of knowledge has been critical in providing not only substance but also sustenance to the whole exercise. The sheer amount of "facts" amassed by the British, be it on traditional Malay literature or modern history of Malaya, establishes without doubt the hegemony of colonial knowledge in Malaysia's intellectual realm. Thus a sustainable discussion on Malay identity, whether in the past or at present, is made possible by the rich colonial knowledge. Milner (1994) demonstrated convincingly that even the discourse on "politics" (or should I say "identity") amongst the pre-war Malay writers-cum-nationalists was informed mainly by or conducted within a framework of colonial knowledge.

What is relevant here is for us to examine further the methods of knowledge accumulation that were responsible in creating an impressive corpus of colonial knowledge. I find the approach introduced and applied by Bernard Cohn (1996), based on his longitudinal research on British rule in India, extremely useful.

He argues that what enabled the British to classify, categorize, and bound the vast social world that was India (and in Malaysia, too) so that it could be controlled was its all-important *investigative modalities* devised to collect and amass "facts". These "facts" and translation works, says Cohn, were pivotal to the British in its conquest of the "epistemological space" of

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India (and in Malaysia). He defines investigative modality as follows:

> An *investigative modality* includes the definition of a body of information that is needed, the procedures by which appropriate knowledge is gathered, its ordering and classification, and then how it is transformed into usable forms such as published reports, statistical returns, histories, gazetteers, legal codes, and encyclopedias. (Cohn 1996, p. 5)

He shows that some of the investigative modalities, such as historiography and museology are general in nature. The survey and census modalities are more highly defined and closely related to administrative needs. These modalities are constructed and tailored to specific institutional or "departmental" agenda and become routinized in the day-to-day colonial bureaucratic practices. Some are even transformed into "sciences" such as economics, ethnology, tropical medicine, comparative law, or cartography, and their practitioners become professionals (Cohn 1996, p. 5). Obviously, this was an activity of not only the British but also other colonial powers, including the Dutch, as explored by Pyenson (1989).

The *historiographic modality* has three important components. First, it is in the form of the production of settlement reports, which are produced on a district-by-district basis. It usually consists of a detailed account of how revenue is assessed and collected by the different local indigenous regimes and a collection of local customs, histories, and land tenure systems. Second, it involves the ideological construction of the nature of indigenous civilizations, which eventually provides the space of the formation of a legitimizing discourse about British civilizing mission in the colony. The third involves histories of the British in the colony, the creation of "emblematic heroes and villains" (Cohn 1996, p. 6) and their "histories" are concretized in the form of memorials and sacred spaces in various parts of the colony.

The *survey modality* encompasses a wide range of practices, from mapping to collecting botanical specimens, to recording architectural and archeological sites of historic significance, or the detailed measuring of the peasant's field. When the British came to India and later Malaysia, through systematic surveys they were able to describe and classify both countries' zoology, geology, botany, ethnography, economic products, history, and sociology, and also to create an imaginary nation-wide grid and locate any site in both countries for economic, social, and political

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purposes. In short, the concept of "survey" came to cover any systematic and official investigation of the natural and social features of the indigenous society through which vast amounts of knowledge were transformed into textual forms such as encyclopaedias and extensive archives.

The *enumerative modality*, particularly through the census, enabled the British to construct social categories by which the indigenous society was ordered for administrative purposes. In fact, the census was assumed to reflect the basic sociological facts such as race, ethnic groups, culture, and language. It thus objectified social, cultural, and linguistic differences amongst the indigenous peoples and the migrant population that led to the reification of Malaya as a polity in which conflict could only be controlled, from the colonialist's viewpoint, by the strong hands of their bureaucracy and armed forces. This control is effected through the *surveillance modality* through which detailed information is gathered on "peripheral" or "minority" groups, and categories of people whose activities are perceived as a threat to social order are closely observed and contained. Methods such as anthropometry introduced by Alphonse Bertillon of the French police and fingerprinting system by William Herschel enabled the British to describe, classify, and identify individuals rather accurately for "security" and other general purposes.

The *museological modality* begins with the perception that the colony is a vast museum, and thus its countryside is assumed to be filled with ruins and it is a source of collectibles and curiosities, or artifacts, to fill local as well as European museums, botanical gardens, and zoos. This modality becomes an exercise of a macro open representation of the indigenous antiquity, culture, and society to both the local and European public. The *travel modality* complements the museological one. If the latter provides concrete representations of the natives, the former helps to create a repertoire of images and typifications, even stereotypes, that determines what is significant to the European eyes, something usually considered as aesthetic — "romantic", "exotic", "picturesque" — such as architecture, costume, cuisine, ritual performances, historical sites, and even bare-breasted females. These images and typifications are often found in paintings and prints as well as novels and short stories written by the colonial scholar-administrators or their wives and friends. The

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tradition of coffee-table books, for instance, emerged from such a context.

These modalities represent, according to Cohn, a set of "officializing procedures" upon which the British established and extended their capacity into numerous areas:

> … control by defining and classifying space, making separations between public and private spheres, by recording transactions such as sale of property, by counting and classifying populations, replacing religious institutions as the registrar of births, marriages, and deaths, and by standardizing languages and scripts. (Cohn 1996, p. 1)

The colonial state therefore introduced policies and rules that helped frame the people's mind and action within a pre-decided epistemological and practical grid.

For instance, the famous Malay Reservation Enactment 1913, first defines who is a Malay, and second, defines the scope of the use of the land categorized as such, and eventually sets the public and commercial value of the land. Since this particular Act was instituted in eleven different *negeri* (provinces) in Malaya, individually according to the *negeri* constitution, it offers a slightly different definition of "who is a Malay person". So someone of Arab descent is a Malay in Kedah but not in Johor, or someone of Siamese descent is a Malay in Kelantan but not in Negeri Sembilan. It could be said that Malay and Malayness is not only created and represented but contested through a single Act such as the Malay Reservation Act.

In a different circumstance, the growth of public education and its rituals fosters official beliefs in how things are and how they ought to be because the schools are crucial "civilizing" institutions and seek to produce moral and productive citizens. Through schools much of the "facts" amassed through the officializing procedures or investigative modalities are channelled to the younger population thus shaping their own perception of what social reality is, most of which are constructed by colonial knowledge anyway. More than that, with the existence of Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English schools, ethnic boundaries become real and ethnic identities become essentialized and ossified through elements such as language and cultural practices.

The bigger and more lasting sociological implication that colonial knowledge has impacted upon the colonized is the idea that the "nation-

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state" is the natural embodiment of history, territory, and society. Thus nation-state becomes dependent on colonial knowledge in determining, codifying, controlling, and representing the past as well as documenting and normalizing a vast amount of information that formed the basis of its capacity to govern. We are too familiar with "facts" provided by reports and statistical data on commerce and trade, health, demography, crime, transportation, industry, and so on, all of which is taken as self-evident in an unquestioning manner. We rarely question the identity of these facts, at least in the Malaysian case. These facts and their collection, conducted in the steep tradition of colonial knowledge, lay at the foundation of the modern post-colonial nation-state such as Malaysia. The whole Westernization process, through which the nation-state concept was introduced and practised, is indeed founded on such knowledge. The concept is rooted in the European world of social theories, belief, and thought system and classificatory schema that subsequently shape and reshape the lives of the subjects.

What I have briefly described above is basically the "identity of a history", namely, the identity of Malaysian history. It is within this history that modern identities in Malaysia, such as Malay and Malayness, have emerged, consolidated, and reified. Against such a background I shall now proceed to examine the experience of identity formation and contestation in Malaysia, in particular the contestation about Malayness, both in the past and at present, followed by an examination on Chinese identity and "Chineseness".

The Construction "Malay" and "Malayness"

In a recent important contribution, framed within Anthony D. Smith's empiricist concept of *ethnie*, Reid (1997) sketches the different meanings and applications of the term Malay and Malayness in the history of the Malay archipelago: first, as self-referent categories amongst the peoples inhabiting the archipelago; second, as a social label used by the peoples of South Asia and China, who were mainly traders; and third, by the Europeans, namely, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, and the British, as travellers, traders, and eventually colonizers.

In the first and second instance, arguably a non-European context, Malay and Malayness, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were

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associated with two major elements, namely, (a) "a line of kingship acknowledging descent from Sriwijaya and Melaka" and (b) "a commercial diaspora which retained some of the customs, language and trade practices in the emporium of Melaka" (Reid 1997, p. 7). As a pillar of Malayness, the kingship (read: *kerajaan* and the royal family) was more prominent in the area around the Straits of Malacca. Islam was also considered as another pillar of Malayness because the kingship had Islam as the provider of its core values. The commercial diaspora constituted peoples from outside the Malacca Straits area, such as from Borneo, Makasar, and Jawa. They defined their Malayness in terms of language and customs, thus adding two more pillars of Malayness.

Sociologically speaking, the way the label Malay or Malayness is being used by the indigenous inhabitants of the archipelago during the pre-European era was both objective and subjective in nature. The kingship was used as an objective measure. The use of Islam was both objective and subjective in the sense that it was an objective criterion to define the kingship and his subjects (Muslims and non-Muslims). However, subjectively, anyone who embraced Islam could be counted as Malay. Equally, those who were non-Muslim and non-Malay could be labelled as Malay as long as they practised the Malay way of life, spoke Malay, put on Malay costume, cooked Malay cuisine, and became an integral part of the Malay trading network.

Interestingly, this was not dissimilar to the way the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch used both the label Malay and Malayness. Both, being merchants first and ruler second, their main concerns were materialistic. Ideologically, at home, unlike the French and the German, they were not propagators of the concept of nation-state but more inclined to frame their approach towards "civilizing" the natives (perceived at first as non-human) within a vigorously religious orientation. This is confirmed emphatically by Norman Davies in his brilliant *Europe: A History* (1997), wherein he describes the activities and behaviour orientation of European overseas, including in the "East Indies", in mid-fifteenth century:

> Europeans sailed overseas ... for reasons of trade, of loot, of conquest, and increasingly of religion. For many, it provided the first meeting with people of different races. To validate their claim over the inhabitants of the conquered

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> lands, the Spanish monarchs, for instance, had to first establish that non-Europeans were human ... and were ordered to read out to all native peoples: "The Lord our God, Living and Eternal, created Heaven and Earth, and one man and woman, of whom you and I, and all the men of the world, were and are descendants". To confirm the point, Pope Paul III decreed in 1537 that "all Indians are truly men, not only capable of understanding the Catholic faith, but ... exceedingly desirous to receive it". (Davies 1997, pp. 510–11)

Like all merchants and sailors trading across oceans, compiling a detailed list of people and things, including the cargoes, carried in their ships was a mandatory exercise for the Portuguese and Dutch merchants not only for reason of general accountability but also for the sake of safety. Therefore, they had to devise ways and means of classifying and categorizing the content of a ship, including its sailors and officers. In these records it was found that captains of ships were identified and recorded by Dutch harbourmasters as "Chinese", "Javanese", Bugis-Makasar, Balinese, Madurese, Arab, and "Malay" captains. Sailors were similarly labelled. They were mainly adopting the local labels without any conscious attempt to reconstitute and redefine according to a preconceived European notion. Therefore, both the objective and subjective local notions embedded in the social labels "Malay" or "Malayness" remained unchanged.

Based on this evidence, Reid (1997, p. 8) argues that the subjective aspect of Malay and Malayness, as observed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, allowed plurality in the subsequent composition of the social category Malay because it was "exceptionally open to new recruits from any background". He thus postulates that "it (Malayness) can be seen to have evolved towards the idea of *orang Melayu* as a distinct *ethnie*", which is indeed a helpful analytical construct to tie together the historical evidence available to him. But using the same evidence one could still offer an alternative analytical construct because they could be read in many different ways. The fact that the British reconstituted the whole meaning of Malay and Malayness, almost ignoring its *ethnie* sense, as described by Reid (1997, p. 10), is instructive.

Not unlike in India, as described by Cohn (1996), the British in Malaya developed an entirely different approach towards acquiring an understanding of the natives, especially the Malays. First and foremost, they have at their disposal a set of investigative modalities informed by

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an Enlightenment idea that human beings should be classified in a scientific manner not dissimilar to the way Carl Von Linne (Linnaeus) and Charles Darwin classified all living things. Through various ideas and methods within each of the investigative modalities (viz., historiography, survey, museological, enumerative, travel, surveillance) — hence through colonial knowledge — the British were able to construct, with supporting "facts", and introduce many names and categories that many in Malaysia today think of as natural and that have existed since time immemorial.

Stamford Raffles was influential in this sense. For instance, he renamed a major Malay text, originally titled rather simply by its author as *Peraturan Segala Raja-Raja*, a genealogical description of kings and their rituals and ceremonies, as *Sejarah Melayu* or *Malay Annas* (Reid 1997, p. 11). William Marsden, the author of *History of Sumatra* (1811, reprinted 1966), notes that the idea of the peninsula as the place of Malay origins was entirely an European one, particularly that of the British. So the Malay Peninsula was from then translated into Malay as *Tanah Melayu* (literally: Malay land).

However, it was Raffles' essay, entitled "On the Malayu Nation, with a Translation of Its Maritime Institution" in the journal *Asiatic Researches* (vol. 12, 1818, originally published in 1809) that set the tone for the subsequent discourse on Malay and Malayness amongst the Europeans as well as amongst the Malays much later. He wrote:

> I cannot but consider the Malayu nation as one people, speaking one language, though spread over so wide a space, preserving their character and customs, in all the maritime states lying between Sulu Seas and the Southern Oceans. (Raffles 1818, p. 103)

With the founding of Penang in 1786 and the subsequent establishment of the Straits Settlement in 1824, the Raffles concept of Malayu "nation" became Malay "race". The consolidation of the term Malay "race" as an accepted identity by both the colonial power and the Malays themselves was the result of the presence of the Europeans and the Chinese. Malay writers, such as Abdullah Munshi, began, in the 1840s, to use the term *bangsa Melayu*, or Malay race or Malay people; and the term entered the public sphere. When the first Malay language newspaper appeared in the Straits Settlements, in 1907, it was called *Utusan Melayu*. Before

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that, in the 1891 colonial census, three racial categories became officialized, namely, "Chinese", "Tamils", and "Malay". With the increased immigration of the Chinese and Indian labourers to British Malaya in the early 1900s which created a plural society in the colony, the concept of Malay as race is here to stay.

The establishment of English and Chinese schools at the turn of the century was soon followed by the setting up of Malay vernacular ones, each teaching general education in English, Mandarin, and Malay, respectively. In the Malay schools, the British-constructed Malay historiography became the basis of the school curricula, particularly with the introduction of the Malay *hikayat* to inculcate a certain sense of historical identity, clearly a re-invention. The introduction of the Malay Reservation Act in 1913 officialized the definition of "Malay" and "Malayness". These public activities, mostly supported and sanctioned by the colonial government, gave life to the term and concept of Malay, both from the social actors' as well as the observers' viewpoints.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Malay nationalism developed almost in the same period alongside Chinese nationalism in the fashion of English nationalism. Thus, almost overnight the Malay "race" became a Malay "nation". Of course, there was contestation within the Malays, seeking the real Malay — *Melayu asli* or *Melayu jati* — and this ideological difference became the basis of factions amongst Malay nationalists. The strongest articulation of Malay nationalism was when the British introduced its concept of the "Malayan nation" through its Malayan Union, a unitary state project. After much protest, the British relented and accepted the Malay nationalists' alternative, that is, a federalist concept of a "United Malay Kerajaan", officially known as *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu,* translated from the English version "Federation of Malaya" (Ariffin Omar 1993; Milner 1994; Balasubramaniam 1998).

In formulating the Constitution for an independent Federation of Malaya, the British, the Chinese, and the Indians bargained hard with the Malays. The Chinese and the Indians have become citizens of the newly independent state but they have to acknowledge *ketuanan Melayu*, or Malay dominance. This means they have to accept "special Malay privileges" in education and government service, the Malay royalty as

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their ruler, Islam as the official religion, and Malay language as the official language.

The formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 introduced a new dimension to the understanding and definition of Malay and Malayness as a result of the presence of the natives in Sarawak and Sabah who are Muslims, for example, the Dusun and Murut in Sabah, and the Melanau, in Sarawak. Unlike the Malays in peninsular Malaysia, these native groups did not form the majority of the population, both in the demographic and political sense. As Muslims they formed less than 40 per cent of the population, the rest being non-Muslim natives and Chinese. In electoral terms, they could not capture more than 45 per cent of the seats in the local legislative assemblies of Sarawak and Sabah. This posed a major political problem to the Malay-dominated federal government based in Kuala Lumpur. It had no choice but to co-operate and co-opt the local non-Malay Muslims as their political partners. In Sarawak, after the 1966 Emergency that led to the downfall of an Iban chief minister, Stephen Kalong Ningkan, the federal Malay-dominated government managed to install a Sarawak government led by a Melanau Muslim with the support of the local Chinese. In Sabah, there was a ready partner, Datu Mustapha, who was able to rule with the support of the Chinese, too. To avoid further tension and problem in the *negeri*-federal relations the term *bumiputera* became an important ethnic category in federal government efforts at solidarity-making, thus combining the Malays and the native Muslims and non-Muslims of Sarawak and Sabah in a single category.

When the NEP was launched in 1971, the category *bumiputera* became an incredibly significant ethnic category. It was officialized and became critical in the distribution of development benefits, both for the poor as well as the entrepreneur class of *bumiputera* origin. However, the Malays and their Muslim *bumiputera* counterparts in Sarawak and Sabah remained together. But subsequently the Christian Kadazan in Sabah formed a breakaway opposition political party called Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in the mid-1980s and later came into power to rule Sabah successfully for two electoral terms. The relationship between the Sabah state and the federal government during that period could be described, at best, as in a state of stable tension. Sarawak meanwhile remained

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under the control of Muslim natives (that is, the Malay Melanau) who were at the helm. In other words, Islam remained as the single most important pillar of Malayness.

In an attempt to win back Sabah, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) made a historic decision in the late 1980s to open it up to non-Muslim *bumiputera*. As a result, UMNO established more than twenty divisions in Sabah. Together with the Chinese party and another non-Muslim *bumiputera* party, UMNO won nearly 50 per cent of the state seats in the 1990 state elections with the other half won by the PBS. After successfully luring a number of PBS state councillors to join the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional (or National Front) coalition party, Sabah came to be ruled by the latter until today. At least in Sabah, "Malayness" as defined, understood, and proclaimed by UMNO, which has its origin in the Malay nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s, became redefined for political expedience. This demonstrates the invented nature and artificiality of the category Malay and Malayness. At the same time the importance of the term *bumiputera* within the Malaysian context became elevated further.

What I have tried to demonstrate above is basically the formation of an identity, in this case Malay and Malayness, as defined and popularly understood in contemporary Malaysia. This identity originated from a British construction informed by colonial knowledge amassed through the application of the various investigative modalities, which in turn became the basis of the Malaysian federalism of post-colonial Malaysia. The emergence of the category *bumiputera* is an interesting one but not something really new. In the 1891 colonial census the official category for the Malays was "Malays and other Natives of the Archipelago". About eighty years later, in 1971, the social category *bumiputera* was created and officialized as if to replace the colonial category not only as a shorter version but also with the same meaning (Hirschman 1986, 1987).

The Construction of "Chinese" and "Chineseness"

In the pre-colonial era, Chinese as a social category, like other categories at that time, did not have the same "ethnic" or "racial" connotation it has today. It was used as a label to describe the place of origin, language, and culture of one of the participants in the trade network within the

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vast area of the Malay Archipelago. In fact, what we know today as Malays were then labelled not as Malays but as Javanese, Buginese, Minangkabaus, Madurese, Arabs, Ceylonese, Indians, Portuguese, and Spanish, again connoting their place of origin, language, and culture.

However, the Chinese did have a special position in the eyes of the indigenous inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago then because some Malay rulers had to pay tribute to the Chinese ruler in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Tan Chee Beng 1988). So, besides being seen as a group in the local commercial network, they were also perceived by the Malay rulers as a group of people representing a powerful state from whom they sought protection and paid homage and tribute. The Malay rulers did not have to do so to the Indians, the Arabs, or the European traders.

Another interesting feature of the Chinese presence then was the fact that many of them who were traders married local females and became assimilated into the local community, giving rise to a group called Chinese Peranakan, both in Indonesia and Malaysia. This group had a special role in both countries. In Indonesia, they were responsible for spreading and strengthening the Malay language as lingua franca, by establishing and financing Malay language newspapers and magazines. This activity was useful for their business interest. In Malaysia, not only were the Chinese Peranakan (or the Baba) critical in the commercial sphere, especially in Malacca, but they were also famous for being responsible in creating "creolized" cultural practices, for example, in the form of cuisine, costume, music, and language in which Malay and Chinese elements were combined (Tan Chee Beng 1988).

Therefore, the pre-colonial Chinese presence in the Malay world, as viewed by the local social actors backed by Malay classical historiography, was relatively neutral politically and unproblematic socio-culturally. They were seen as not very much different from the Arabs, Indians, and European traders, whether they were in the Borneo region, Java, Sumatra, or the Malay peninsula. The predominance of commercial interests overrode any other interests. Besides that they came in small groups, according to place of origin or dialect groups, and most of them would return to China after having accumulated some wealth. Only those who married the locals stayed on permanently and embraced local cultures.

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Therefore, the Chinese traders often formed alliances with local aristocratic rulers to exploit local natural produce, or to be involved in extractive industries such as tin-mining or in agricultural development, such as gambier plantation. By the eighteenth century, when the British and Dutch traders came as competitors for the same local produce and primary commodity products, the nature of Chinese relationship with the indigenous peoples changed radically because both they and the British were vying to form profitable economic alliances with local rulers.

The relationship was transformed in two ways. First, the "we" and "they" divide between the Malays and foreign traders was not important before the coming of the Europeans, but it became openly emphasized as a result of European competition. Second, the Malay rulers themselves were factionalized as a result of the new commercial competition, sometimes initiated by the Chinese and at other times by the British. Hence the objective and subjective nature of the Chinese and the Europeans as an ethnic category emerged and became further highlighted, sometimes developing into stereotypes. For instance, the Chinese came to identify themselves as Chinese instead of by dialect group, not unlike the Malays, who no longer saw themselves as Javanese, Minangkabaus, or Sumatrans, but simply as Malays. Chineseness became critical in this context; the essence of what is Chinese is constructed according to language, culture, family system, and ties with mainland China (Purcell 1967; Leong 1976; Carstens 1988; Cushman and Wang 1988). In the same way, the Malays constructed their Malayness through the concept of kingship, language, custom, and Islam.

The establishment of British rule in the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca, and Singapore) meant the introduction of British "officialized procedures" conducted through the various forms of investigative modalities. For instance, in the first two censuses conducted by the British, the "Malay" and "Chinese" categories were absent. The Chinese and Malays were identified by their separate places of origin and in the case of the Chinese, their dialects too. But in the 1871 census, the various Chinese dialect groups were collapsed into one ethnic category "Chinese" while the Malays were categorized as "Malay and other Natives". At the same time, a new category was introduced: "Tamils and others from India".

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At the turn of the century, large numbers of Chinese immigrants began to enter the Straits Settlements and, later, British Malaya as a result of voluntary migration as well as forced migration. Having a critical mass of Chinese population to contend with, the Chinese began to set up their own schools, business guilds, and dialect-based associations to safeguard their culture and their commercial interests. From these associations developed cultural and educational organizations. This was partly a reaction to the British officialized procedures that involved the extraction of all sorts of taxes, the introduction of English-medium schools, and also the establishment of a land tenure favouring the Malays (Malay Reservation Enactment 1913).

By the 1920s, Chinese and Chineseness, which began simply as an ethnic category turned into an ethnic network and eventually became an ethnic association. From this a Chinese community emerged in British Malaya. The source of the strength of the Chinese community in maintaining its Chineseness was the ties established amongst themselves and with other Chinese groups in the Southeast Asia region as well as with those in mainland China.

These circumstances constructed a core of sentiments which was reinforced by stories about the Chinese past (heroes, villains, events, and so forth) and the Great Tradition of the Chinese civilization. This created a "historical" identity, an essence of the community, a myth of common ancestry and of a super-family, elements of common culture, a link to the homeland, and a sense of solidarity. Colonial policies favouring the Chinese to preserve their Chineseness were related to their critical role in the commercial sphere (Purcell 1967).

But in the 1920s and 1930s, this historical identity came under attack by a new and aggressive nationalism in mainland China which was built upon Sun Yat-sen's concept of *minzu* (translating the Western concepts of "race" and "nation"). For this period, according to most writings on the Nanyang Chinese by Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars, the local Chinese responded rather enthusiastically to the idea of their "racial" origins, hence leading them to identify with the nationalism in China (Leong 1976; Hara 1997).

Subsequently, this led to the emergence of a Chinese nationalist identity that became real to the local Malayan Chinese because of the

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successful efforts by numerous teachers and journalists recruited from China to propagate the idea of such an identity. Hundreds of Chinese primary and secondary schools consolidated this identity amongst the next generation of the Chinese. The expansionist activities of the Japanese in China and the resultant Sino-Japanese War and, later, World War II involving Southeast Asia made the identity not only much stronger but also a highly emotional one (Cheah Boon Kheng 1979, 1983).

After World War II, the new Malay nationalist leaders found the Chinese nationalist identity rather alarming. The situation became complicated because the British found that the nationalist identity movement seemed to have influenced a large number of Chinese in the colony. Considering that the Chinese numbered about 40 per cent of the population in Malaya at that time, it was a considerable problem for the British to deal with. Further complications developed when some of the younger Chinese nationalists had been influenced by the war and became members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which identified themselves with the world-wide anti-colonial struggle for independence rather than with the Chinese nation. The British and the Malay nationalists had to contend with these two strands of Chinese groups, both Chinese-educated: one, the nationalists who were oriented towards China and, the other, the communists who were also oriented towards China but a Mao Zedong one, which was at the same time oriented towards anti-colonialism. However, there was a third group, albeit a small one, which was a group of young and English-educated Chinese who were inclined towards Malaya and exploring the possibility of being Malayans.

Thus, it could be said that World War II became the watershed in the fragmenting of Chinese identity in Malaysia, namely, into three strands: Chinese nationalist, Chinese communist, and Chinese Malayan. Each was significant in the subsequent configuration of Chineseness in Malaysia. The Department of Chinese Affairs established by the British to oversee the Chinese community and their activities, both official and non-official, was critical in shaping these configurations, which involved a Chinese community that formed nearly half the population in Malaya.

The majority of the Chinese community was willing to abandon Chinese nationalist identity and replace it with the new Malayan national

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identity. The formation of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) as a political party in 1951 was significant in this new move because the MCP was outlawed and receded to the jungle when it was hunted by the British security forces during the Emergency period of 1948–1960. The community leaders still retained some sense of their early historical identity as Chinese and also sought to have the cultural features of that identity officially recognized as an integral part of a plural Malayan society. This created severe tensions in Malaya (Wang 1970; Loh 1982).

The push for a strong communal Chinese identity to be preserved was very strong especially through electoral politics, namely, during the 1955 general elections, the first ever in Malaya. With independence in 1957 and the awarding of Malayan citizenship *en masse* to the Chinese, it reshaped yet again the Chinese identity in the sense that it became more tolerant and open to the idea of coexisting with other communal groups. The openness was demonstrated in the vigorous debates amongst the Chinese on the issue of assimilation and integration, and also their debates with the Malay élite.

Sociologically speaking, the idea of a Chinese "race" was then replaced with *ethnie*, a concept based upon the idea of "cultural identity" defined in orientalist Tylorian terms. The Chinese cultural identity has its own traits that can be imparted from generation to generation, namely, Chinese knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, religions, and law. This can be effectively imparted not only at home but more importantly through Chinese schools. For that reason, Chinese education has been perceived as critical to the maintenance of Chinese community and Chineseness (Tan Liok Ee 1988, 1997). This is not dissimilar to the way Islam is perceived in the context of the Malay community as the definer of Malayness.

Therefore, post-war Chinese identity and Chineseness, as perceived by the Chinese in Malaysia is essentially about their language and culture imparted through education. The language and culture elements are then weaved into the Chinese economy. Here is the classic Malaysian case where "ethnicity and the economy" become the framework not only for self-reference for each of the Malaysian ethnic communities but also in social interaction with other ethnic groups.

It is not surprising therefore that the vigorous expression of

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Chineseness often takes place, rather openly, when they perceive that their language and culture are under threat, especially by government policies that they view as assimilationist or homogenizing in nature. There are numerous examples about this reaction both during the post-war colonial era as well as during the post-colonial period (Ling Liong Sik et al. 1988; Heng Pek Koon 1988).

When the Barnes Education Report of 1951 was introduced proposing English as the sole lingua franca in the education system in British Malaya, thus denying the Chinese the opportunity to learn their mother tongue, the Chinese got together to express their opposition. In 1964 the idea of a Merdeka University, a university with Mandarin as the medium of instruction, was mooted by the Chinese. This idea was revived in 1974 after the introduction of the National Language Act of 1970, making Malay as the national language and medium of instruction in government schools. The Chinese of different strands were united to fight for the establishment of the university but failed when the Federal Court in 1984 rejected it on constitutional grounds. In 1987, when non-Mandarin-speaking Chinese teachers were prompted to run Chinese schools, the Chinese community "revolted" as well because they saw it as an attempt by the government to change the character of Chinese schools, hence Chinese language and culture. The Chinese were equally concerned when the Education Act 1996 was introduced because they wanted assurance that Chinese schools are allowed to exist, even as private ones.

Therefore, it would be simplistic to say that the Malay-Chinese tension is partly the result of the introduction of Malay as the national language and the national medium of instruction in schools, as some observers have argued. It is more accurate to say that the Chinese community would oppose and react negatively to any effort by any party, Malay or British, that they perceive as threatening their educational activities, namely, their schools, because the Chinese school is perceived as the custodian of Chinese language and culture, thus Chineseness.

There are a number of other instances, too, when the Malay-dominated post-colonial Malaysian state embarked on a "national cultural policy" in which Malay culture was proclaimed as the core of

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national culture and it received adverse reactions from the Chinese. The Chinese community was unsure of the long-term nature and effect of this policy. Would it be assimilationist? That was the main worry. It was made worse when a junior Malay minister said that the lion dance was not part of Malaysian culture. Suddenly, the "lion dance" was thrusted into the public sphere as a critical symbol representing Chineseness. The rise of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia, since the early 1970s, which forced the Malay-dominated state to co-opt it, in the early 1980s, also became the source of "cultural" concern for the Chinese community.

In the economic sphere, the introduction in 1971 of the NEP, a pro-Malay affirmative action policy, popularly known as the *bumiputera* policy, became a cause of great concern amongst the Chinese community, most of whom felt that they had been denied their right to participate freely in the Malaysian "dependent capitalist economy". There was massive nation-wide opposition to the policy led mainly by the Chinese-dominated opposition party called the Democratic Action Party (DAP). The contentious point was related to the quota system introduced by the NEP, which gives preference to Malays in the field of commerce, education, and public service. However, the protest soon subsided, at least at the élite level within the Chinese community, when they realized that they would also gain a lot materially from this policy because the Malays have no choice but to pair off with their Chinese partners to enable them to enter into businesses they never knew before.

When the Prime Minister of Malaysia launched his "Vision 2020" and its *Bangsa Malaysia*, a united Malaysian nation framework for national unity, after the success of the NEP, there was a sigh of relief amongst the Chinese because it promised, to a certain extent, equal treatment to all ethnic groups in Malaysia. However, this framework is yet to be implemented in full and its success evaluated. But it certainly has created a new "national unity" confidence and rhetoric (Ling Liong Sik 1995).

What I have described above may not have captured the internal divisions within the Chinese community which colour the relationship of the Chinese community with the Malays and other ethnic communities.

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However, this is a useful vantage point to start examining Chineseness in Malaysia.

Distance and Distrust: Insights into the Shaping of Collective Memories in Sino-Malay Relations

When asked to describe the state of ethnic relations in Malaysia, my answer has always been this: "It is in a state of stable tension". This simply means that the different ethnic groups in Malaysia, through a continuous process of negotiation and conversation at all levels, structured and unstructured, within an accepted structural and institutional framework, have been able to strike a balance between "sharing and agreeing on certain things" and "agreeing to disagree on other things". Therefore, there exists a social space for disagreement and dissent, sometimes openly expressed and at other times remaining subterranean. The negotiated consensus gives the stability that dominates inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia. Nonetheless, everyone is aware of the fact that we do disagree on a number of issues. The disagreement has always found space for open public expression. Admittedly, such expression has been and could become the source of tension, but often not for long because it triggers further conversation and negotiation. Because the whole exercise of conversation and negotiation is conducted in the public sphere, usually in the different vernacular mass media, it helps tremendously to reduce the tension before allowing it to develop into an open conflict that everyone knows has to be avoided at all costs.

Thus far in this chapter I have only highlighted the tension aspect within the authority-defined or textual context, articulated within the historical-structural framework and conducted quite frequently in the open, mostly in textual form, such as those published in the newspapers, magazines, government reports, on the Internet, in the numerous booklets sold in the open market, in Lat cartoons, or as expressed on the current affairs programmes of local television stations. In other words, these articulations, in "scientific" academic terms, are legitimate, documented references available in the public domain for researchers to quote and use as "objective" evidence in their research projects.

Based on these objective scientific evidence one could easily conclude that there exists "distance and distrust" (borrowing a phrase from

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Professor Wang Gungwu's lecture at the UKM in September 2003) between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Put in another way, inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia, from this viewpoint, is characterized by "distance and distrust". However, I wish to argue that it is the "distance and distrust" which is mostly subterranean and often unspoken that has become the source of public tension in the relationship. But because this tension is often resolved publicly the result is that it creates the "state of stable tension" I have described above.

If the "distance and distrust" is mostly subterranean and remains unspoken, how then it is reproduced and sustained? I would suggest that it is embedded in the "collective memories" of each ethnic group, and indeed deposited in the individual persona of members of the group. The feelings of distance and distrust are articulated and circulated orally at the dinner table, pubs, *surau*, *kedai kopi*, through family histories and stories, gossip, rumour mongering, and stereotypes.

Phenomenologically, at the agency level these expressions, subjective as they are, often become internalized within each individual persona, continue to contribute to the reproduction of feelings of distance and distrust between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. This is so because they have become part and parcel of everyday idiom and conversation, be they in the form of jokes, stories of success and suffering, or in other non-textualized, oral forms. Interestingly, sometimes they are expressed openly by one party to another in a variety of contexts and usually the ones listening would just laughed it off then, but the not-so-positive feelings remain.

It goes without saying that new idioms, stories, and jokes continue to enter the construction, reproduction, and reconstitution process of the "collective memories". This is the result of the larger situation of stable tension at the broader structural level, such as the implementation of a particular ethnicized government policy and the ethnicized debate that ensued. Therefore, there is a continuous flow of "raw material", as it were, from the structure to the agency level, feeding into and contributing to the expansion of the corpus of the "collective memories". Very often, it is the sad and traumatic "ethnicized" experience of an individual or of a family that gets circulated quite quickly by word of mouth and this reinforces the less-than-positive component of the

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"collective memories". This adds to the distance and distrust. Admittedly, happy experiences often become part of the collective memories. But usually it is the not-so-happy ones that last longer and linger on in the collective memories, sometimes for generations.

In the following pages, I wish to highlight the tension aspect in the everyday, experiential context of Sino-Malay relations based on the collective memories that I have discussed above. The stories that I shall present are highly selective and simplified, and thus not meant to be representative. Nor am I attempting to draft a memoir. These are just insights to help us make sense of how collective memories are constructed and why they remain subterranean and guide our behaviour pattern when we interact with different ethnic groups in Malaysia. I am quite certain that every other Malaysian has his or her own stories to tell, some of which are perhaps more interesting than mine.

Story 1

I was born, and grew up as a child, in the rural area nearby the town of Bahau, Negeri Sembilan, during the Emergency period (1948–60). Bahau was a "black area" and indeed the last area in Malaya to be declared a "white area" when the Emergency ended on 31 July 1960. For a number of reasons, I learnt the meaning of the word *kepiu* (the dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed by the authorities) and the image of "who is a Chinese" quite quickly.

- First, I could not leave the house and did all my *mengaji Qur'an* (read: *Qur'an*) at home in the evening.
- Second, I was warned that if I did leave the house, I might be shot by *Cina komunis* apparently lurking in the dark behind the trees in the backyard.
- Third, my auntie, who was an SC (Special Constabulary) personnel, often took me, to accompany her, to a Chinese new village, surrounded by high barbed-wire fence, called Mahsan in Bahau where she was often on guard duty. I saw many Chinese kids playing amongst themselves in the compound of the new village, but was never allowed to interact with them because they were all *komunis.*
- Fourth, two of my uncles were in the "Askar Melayu" (the Malay Regiment). One of them, I was told, was shot dead by *Cina komunis.*

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The other survived an ambush attack by *Cina komunis*, was slightly injured, and got promoted to lance corporal. He often boasted to all of us kids how he managed to kill so many *Cina komunis.* Whether that was true or false, I was impressed.

- Fifth, my father, a Malay primary school teacher famous for his liberal use of the *rotan* (cane), and unfortunately my class teacher, too, was involved in organizing a *silat* group in the *kampung*, apparently to prepare some of the villagers for self-defence in case they were attacked by *Cina komunis*. He made his name in the *kampung* for his heroism and success in the physical encounter with the Chinese *Bintang Tiga,* a militant group, at Batu Kikir soon after the war ended. He promised those who joined the *silat* group that they would become *kebal* (invincible), even if they were shot at, if they recite a few thousand times some verses of the *Qur'an* while *bertapa* (literally: to become a semi-hermit) surviving on rice and salt for forty-four days, wear special amulets, and have a specially blessed *parang panjang* (literally: long machete).
- Sixth, at school, I heard more stories about my friends' fathers or relatives in Askar Melayu who lost their lives at the hands of *Cina komunis*. We were constantly reminded of, and often talked among friends about, how bad the Chinese were. Not only were they *komunis* but they also *makan babi* (eat pork) and were *kotor* (unclean) because they *tak basuh buntut* (literally: did not wash their bottoms as they use toilet paper).

The moral of the whole story is that for the whole of my early childhood I did not hear anything good or positive about the Chinese. They were first and foremost *komunis*, hence dangerous people. They were dangerous because they were all violent people. Why? Because they killed my relatives and my friends' family members. They were a people without religion and unhygienic. We had to be cautious of them all the time. I would say that, at least among my peer group in the *kampung* then, our "homogenized" collective memories about the Chinese were totally negative. For those whose education stopped after having finished their primary education and entering the real world, so to speak, to eke out a living, these collective memories dominated their perception about the Chinese. Thus distance and distrust of the Chinese became a lived reality.

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Mine was modified when I entered an urban English school in Kuala Pilah where I had to interact with Chinese and Indian students but lived in a separate Malay students hostel.

Story 2

I had no choice but to board in a Malay students hostel attached to an urban English school because that was the only English school in the whole district of Kuala Pilah. I therefore continued to live in a Malay enclave sharing more information and stories with my peer group, which expanded and reinforced the corpus of negative collective memories I had about the Chinese. However, the hostel master was a Eurasian who taught me cricket. Then I began to interact with the Chinese and Indian students and teachers. Of the six teachers I first encountered in the class, three were Chinese (teaching Geography, Maths, and Science), two Indians (teaching English and History), and a Malay (teaching Malay). Half of the class of thirty-two (Form One A) were Chinese, ten Indians, and the rest Malays. Initially I avoided my Chinese classmates and interacted more with the Indians, perhaps because I did not know much about them. Besides, because I liked athletics, I ended up mingling with the Indians, who were mostly excellent long-distance runners and were in the school team. I liked hockey and cricket and was in the school team too. So, again I mingled with my Indian classmates. My Chinese classmates seemed to be happy playing basketball, ping-pong, volleyball, and badminton.

It was the Chinese teachers, not my Chinese classmates, who slowly modified my memories about the Chinese. They were *garang* (fierce and strict) — there was no doubt about that — giving me loads of homework and sending me to Saturday detention classes for not completing my homework, but they were compassionate and good-hearted, I thought, perhaps because I became good at Maths, Science, and Geography. The Indian teachers were equally unforgiving. They made us stand up on chairs if we did not finish our homework. The school work and school sport context led me to drift away from most of my Malay classmates except for two pretty girls who sat next to me in class, both *anak polis* (children of policemen), with whom I exchanged a lot of "notes" scribbled on paper torn from some Maths exercise books.

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The often inedible food at the hostel forced me to eat out at a Chinese restaurant in front of the school that (according to my fellow Malay hostel mates) cooked *halal* food. That was my first encounter with *kuih pau*, *kuih tiau*, *mee hoon,* and *mee laksa.* On our away to games in the inter-district hockey and athletics competitions I began to frequent Indian banana leaf restaurants and had a taste of *tosai.* Besides P. Ramlee movies, the beautiful Bollywood actresses and the melodic songs which I did not understand a word of (just as in the case of the *Qur'an* that I learnt to recite) made me addicted to the Hindi movies shown every week at the local cinema, thanks to my Indian friends who introduced me to these movies. It was in these frequent interactions with my Indian friends that I learnt more about the Chinese from an Indian perspective, so to speak, some of which was positive but mostly negative.

The only positive thing I remember about my Chinese classmates was that they seemed to be always in the top ten in the class in every subject. I soon became conscious of wanting to compete with them and subsequently put in a lot of effort to try and beat them in the weekly tests and exams. But I did not succeed in doing so all the time. I was enviously impressed by their continued excellent performance and I began to believe what my Indian friends were saying, that the Chinese could be bad but they were very clever and hardworking. After failing repeatedly to beat them in tests and exams to become number one in my class, I began to believe that they were born clever and hardworking. Without realizing it, my respect towards my Chinese classmates grew day by day, albeit grudgingly, even though the two Malay girls were among the top ten of the class, especially in Maths and Science.

The moral of the story is that in the three years of my lower secondary education, my childhood negative collective memories of the Chinese were still strong but had begun to be modified. Although Malay, Chinese, and Indian students were in the same class, we all moved in our own ethnic circles, whether at the hostel, in the playing fields, at the school canteen, or when we studied for exams. Outside school, we rarely interacted. So, we coexisted, both inside and outside the classroom, but did not mix very much. There was indeed ethnic identification to sports and games, too. We (the Malay students in my class) began to understand better, though only partially, the Chinese and Indians, mainly through

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competition in various academic subjects. This positive perception slowly modified the negative stereotypes and collective memories I had about the Chinese. This was just the beginning.

Little did I realize that my enrolment as a student, for four years, in the élite Royal Military College had changed most of my views about the Chinese. My memories about the Chinese was reconstituted and went through a radical change. Even though my interaction with my family members during my holidays, especially when the subject "Chinese" entered our conversation, was conducted in the negative collective memories framework built up during my early childhood days, I was able to say many positive things about the Chinese based on my classroom and outside the classroom experience at the College. How and why has this change come about?

- Firstly, I lived in a six-bed dormitory room with two Chinese, one Indian, and two Malays. I had to interact with them every day, from early in the morning until it was time for bed. One of the Chinese room-mates was the person-in-charge of the room, who taught us how to do things the regimented way as a tightly knit group.
- Secondly, of the twenty-two students in my class, eight were Chinese. Of the seven subject teachers, three were Chinese teachers (of Maths, Science, and English). Because the College had produced, almost every year, excellent overall results in government exams, both at the O and A levels (being always in the top three in the whole country), to maintain the results all were made to work as a team (between students and students and teacher) in a regimented way.
- Thirdly, besides having to accomplish our academic tasks, we went through a series of daily and weekly activities which were military-like in nature, such as group marching, weapon training, shooting practice, map reading, endurance training, and guard duty. Even other activities, such as sports and games or general recreation were conducted in a regimented manner, with Malay, Chinese, and Indian students working closely together.
- Fourthly, the College implemented a variety of punishments for those who did not perform as expected by the standards set or rules designed for us, in both the academic and non-academic spheres.

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> Some were physical punishments and others were academic. Nobody was spared. Quite often, those punished were put in different groups, irrespective of ethnic origins, and suffered together.

The continuous intensive interactions, almost twenty-four hours a day for four years, in an extremely controlled and disciplined situation, forced everyone in the College, irrespective of ethnic and class background, to develop an efficient coping and survival mechanism, both as an individual and as a team, to succeed and achieve the academic and non-academic goals set for us. "Thinking ethnic" had no space in the whole process. We just had to learn to blend and work with every individual to make things work, as it were. In that process, we had no choice but to understand rather quickly our team mates individually as a person, his habits, likes and dislikes, and so on. This bonding process, totally constructed, conducted, and established through repeated activities over a period of four years, made me realize that having loyal friends mattered most. These friends were Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Others.

My childhood negative collective memories about the Chinese remain in my personal "database". I am not able to delete them. But I never really needed to recall any of them during my four years at the College because I was busy trying to survive in a highly regimented context, in which any form of help from anybody was welcomed. I also developed a tremendous respect for individual achievements as well as collective ones. The reconstituted collective memories have been dominant in my life since I left the College.

I also realize that my experience was undoubtedly a unique one, indeed not experienced by my friends at the other élite boarding schools in Malaysia then, such as the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) or the Tunku Khursiah College (TKC), both of which enrolled only Malay, male and female, students, respectively. There were other Malay-only boarding schools then, such as Sekolah Tunku Abdul Rahman (STAR) and Sekolah Dato' Abdul Razak (SDAR). The students in these schools too did not experience what I went through; similarly, for the rest of the students in the government and private schools in the whole country.

There are a number of wider sociological implications I have come to learn from my humble personal experience from a decade or so of

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being at different types of Malaysian schools on the making and shaping of collective memories that would have an impact on Sino-Malay relations in general in Malaysia.

First, at the social actor's or agency level, the decade or so of every student's school life in Malaysia is the most critical site and period in which the ethnicized collective memories, introduced and internalized in the early childhood experience of all ethnic groups, are either enhanced or reconstituted. In my case it became reconstituted. For others, perhaps it became enhanced, hence the often highlighted "ethnic polarization" problem at the local Malaysian universities. The elements that contributed to the polarization were introduced in a student's life when he/she was a primary and secondary school pupil. It thus became part of his/her individual personal make-up or identity, guiding his/her thinking, attitude, perception, as well as pattern of behaviour.

Secondly, in the wider structural context, the presence of ethnic-based parties, the implementation of ethnic-based public policies, indeed the ethnicized social space in the overall Malaysian social life made it impossible for the ethnicized collective memories to be really effectively reconstituted. Perhaps at the superficial level this is possible. But deep inside of everybody's ethnicized collective memories things have not changed very much. In other words, the distance and distrust remains. But every Malaysian knows that for pragmatic reasons, such a feeling has to be suppressed for the idealized general good of society. What had happened in Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia, Fiji, Indonesia, and indeed in Europe and the United States is a reminder to all Malaysians of the possible consequences of open expressions of the distance and distrust between communities. This has created, in inter-ethnic relations terms, a situation in Malaysia which I call a "state of stable tension".

Conclusion

While we are all interested in the issue of identity formation and contestation in Malaysia and elsewhere, whether dealing with Malayness or Chineseness, we must also take note of the way we approach the subject matter.

I contend that like most social phenomenon, identity formation takes place within what I would call a "two social reality" context: first,

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the "authority-defined" reality, one that is authoritatively defined by those who are part of the dominant power structure, and second, the "everyday-defined" social reality, which is experienced by the people in the course their everyday life. These two social realities exist side by side at any given time (Shamsul 1996*b*). Although intricately linked and constantly influencing and shaping each other, they may or may not be identical. They are in fact rarely identical: the "everyday-defined" social reality is experienced and the "authority-defined" social reality is only observed and interpreted. Both are mediated through the social class position of those who observe and interpret social reality and those who experience it. In the Malaysian case, the ethnic factor is equally important, if not more important, than the social class factor.

Woven and embedded in the relationship between these two social realities is social power, articulated in various forms such as majority-minority discourse and state-society contestation. In concrete familiar terms, it involves social collectives such as nationalist groups, literary groups, professional groups, scholar-administrators, academicians, and so on. The discourse takes both the oral and written forms, some literary and others simply statistical, informed usually by various dimensions of the idea about "social justice" reflecting the wider, inherent social inequality, hence unequal social power, embedded in the "two social reality" context.

So in our discussion on Malay and Malayness, and Chinese and Chineseness, particularly in the context of colonial knowledge and its investigative modalities, we are essentially concerned with an "authority-defined" perspective, which itself is not homogeneous in nature. There are various views and positions within this perspective, and some are even in opposition to one another.

For instance, in the Malay case, there were British colonial officers who were openly paternalistic in their attitude towards the Malays, strongest perhaps amongst the educationists. There were also those who were simply authoritarian and even racist. Therefore the site of contestation existed even within the colonial knowledge, a form of knowledge that was authority-defined.

Such contestation was amply reflected in the competing notions of nations, or the "nation-of-intent", amongst the Malay nationalists, too

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(Shamsul 1996*a*). Some preferred *Melayu Raya* as their nation-of-intent, others the Islamic state, and another group a united Malay *kerajaan*. I have not really captured extensively the internal contestation within the Chinese community in this chapter but it certainly exists and has been discussed in detail by scholars.

In contemporary Malaysia, the recently introduced concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is by no means an uncontested one. In fact, the very notion of one *Bangsa Malaysia* has actually generated a healthy debate in the authority-defined circles regarding the various ways of forging this *Bangsa Malaysia*. The "assimilationist" would prefer a homogeneous *Bangsa Malaysia* but the "accommodationist" prefers a plural one. Therefore, what we are looking at is not only about identity contestation but also about contesting methods or frameworks of examining and elaborating the subject matter we are interested in.

At the everyday-defined level, collective memories, as the narration of my personal experience shows, play a pivotal role in shaping the pattern of inter-ethnic interactions, in this case between the Chinese and the Malays. Without doubt, the construction of collective memories has been influenced by the wider historical-structural context. Thus the articulation of the personal and the structural, conducted in a dialectical manner and as a continuous process, shapes the latter very much. However, the person-to-person interactions that every Malaysian inevitably experiences as a member of the larger society individualizes the collective memories. This, in turn, shapes how an individual reacts and perceives the Other or behaves when interacting with another person from a different ethnic group.

The perceptions, reactions, and behaviour are indeed varied and heterogeneous, reflecting the multitude of personal experiences. In the Sino-Malay relations it is underlined, as some would put it, by a feeling of "distance and distrust". However, at different points in the interaction between the Malay individual and the Chinese as a group, or vice versa, this feeling is articulated and contextualized according to the issues or events being discussed or that one has to confront or come to terms with, hence the "Malay viewpoint" or the "Chinese viewpoint". At these points, the collective memories, though important to each individual, are often suppressed for the idealized good of the society. This does not stop an individual or a group of individuals from expressing the distance

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and distrust openly, which is observed in the present hot debate on the issue of the teaching Science and Maths in English in Chinese-medium schools. We saw the Chinese adopted a range of strategies to deal with this issue, from a highly personal to a collective one, which is not necessarily homogeneous in its overall perspective.

The fact that this discourse has been conducted openly between the different individuals and groups from both the Malay and Chinese communities, demonstrating as well as giving space for a plurality of opinions and positions, has reduced the "distance and distrust" thus maintaining a situation of stable tension that has characterized inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia, at least in the last three peaceful decades and hopefully so for many more decades to come. This is an opinion from the perspective of a Malay, the author.

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CHAPTER 7

Nation-Building in Malaysia: Victimization of Indians?

P. RAMASAMY

What is the nature and character of nation-building in Malaysia? To what extent have the different ethnic groups — Malays, Chinese, and Indians — developed a meaningful stake in the overall system? Does the current nation-building model engender positive and harmonious inter-ethnic relations between the three principal ethnic groups? By using the case of Indian Malaysians, it will be argued that the current nation-building model predicated on the basis of advancing Malay dominance/hegemony runs counter to their political, economic, cultural, and social interests. In the last two decades or so, as a result of the implementation of policies and measures in favour of Malays, Indians have become politically marginalized, economically deprived of opportunities, and culturally alienated. Indian involvement in criminal activities has nothing to do with their particular cultural or ethnic disposition; it is more related to the way urbanization, commercialization, and ethnic discrimination have impacted on them.

Concept of Nation-Building

The concept of nation-building is as relevant today as it was two or

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three decades ago. During the initial period, the concept of nation-building was invoked to mobilize ethnic groups to shed their cultural and ethnic differences in favour of some common denominators. However, persistence of ethno-nationalism leading to protracted ethnic conflicts in many parts of the world led some analysts to assume that the nation-building project hatched on the basis of certain cultural experience might not be suitable for multi-ethnic situations. Scholars like Walker Connor and others have argued that the nation-building project that sought to ignore differences might sow the seeds of destruction of nations (Conner 1994, pp. 29–66). Needless to say, the shift to examine and analyse differences was also precipitated by epistemological critiques of the philosophy of positivism, the focus on feminism, and the attempt to give attention to cultural and identity politics.

Eventually, attention to differences turned out to be counter-productive. Intense ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world leading to terrible loss of lives, the subjectivity and irrationality of ethno-nationalism, and the necessity for different ethnic groups to coexist with one another on the basis of certain common denominators helped to re-invoke the concept of nation-building once again. It was realized that the investigation of the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism and the construction of a worldview arising out of differences might not be desirable in a world that was increasingly becoming interdependent. Thus, the urgent need for coexistence among different ethnic groups in certain territorial spaces provided some catalyst for the reconceptualization of the nation-building project. In the words of one student of ethnic politics, nation-building was invoked not so much to identify differences but to strike a healthy balance between what could be tolerated as differences and what was normatively required for the purpose of mutual coexistence of ethnic groups (Brock 1999, pp. 6–7).

There is also a thinking among students of ethnic politics that the nation-building project could be re-invigorated if attempts are made to link with issues such as human rights, democracy, civil society, and the environment. It is believed that by bringing in these universal issues within the framework of nation-building, it would be a lot easier for different ethnic groups to achieve some kind of a broad consensus. Furthermore, these areas might constitute a strong foundation for the

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derivation of consensus on cultural and ethnic matters at some point in time. For instance, recent writings also attest to the important link between civil society and democracy. It is argued that appeal of ethno-politics could be diluted to some extent if non-governmental organizations play a significant part in the larger political process of nations to check and balance the state to ensure that certain universal concerns are given due attention. However, the extent civil society will play a meaningful role in the social transformation of many nations remains unclear.

The above conceptualization is merely to illustrate the point that nation-building is relevant to us in this part of the world. However, nation-building cannot proceed on the basis of earlier theoretical thinking that sought to pay attention to bring disparate groups under one cultural framework. Today, the spread of globalization, the uneven nature of capitalist development, the greater interaction between ethnic groups, sectarian and ethnic violence, and lately the phenomenon of global terrorism reminds us that the nation-building project remains largely unfinished. Whether the project will have an end point remains to be seen. What is relevant here is that the nation-building project cannot be a priori imagined and imposed on a national setting. While the nation-building project is relevant, however, the ingredients of the project will be subject to modification. At this present historical juncture, the phenomenon of global terrorism and the resultant anti-terrorism efforts of the United States and its allies give the impression that there is a civilizational clash between the Islamic and non-Islamic world, an event predicted by Samuel Huntington of Harvard University.

Malaysia's Hegemonic Model

Despite the long years of British colonial rule, the re-drawing of boundaries and the manner in which the country obtained its independence, Malaysian experience in nation-building at least in the initial decade was somewhat unique. Even though the political élite relied heavily on the British tradition in terms of creating and sustaining certain formal democratic institutions, the elements that went into determining the nature of nation-building were largely based on local circumstances. The role of Malays as an indigenous group and the large presence of

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immigrants such as the Chinese and Indians were factored in the derivation of a particular nation-building model constituted on the basis of inter-élite co-operation through the mechanisms of ethic parties such as UMNO (United Malay National Organisation), the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), and the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) within the ethnic coalition of the Alliance party. It was realized by the political élite of the various ethnic groups that without an attempt at co-operation, it was not possible to ensure political and economic stability. Thus, it was the spectre of conflict and instability that provided the main impetus for the élite to experiment through an arrangement that has been popularly termed as consociationalism in the political science literature (Lijphart 1977). For the first decade or so, the nation-building formula came to be determined and guided by the nature of inter-ethnic bargain and compromise. The formula lasted for about twelve years before breaking down as result of intense inter-ethnic conflict and rivalry.

The Alliance's formula of nation-building was not really rooted in any strong ideological or philosophical commitment to some broad values or norms. It was merely a pragmatic methodology adopted to avert major forms of ethnic conflict and hence ensure some form of political stability in the country. This methodology was essentially premised on the grounds of inter-élite co-operation and understanding. The policies and measures adopted for the governance of the country were first debated within the Alliance among the top élites and once there was a consensus they were passed on for implementation (Vorys 1975). However, inter-élite co-operation was based on certain agreed norms: that the non-Malays would recognize the political dominance of Malays, the existence of Malay rulers, and the special position of the Malay language. The Malays represented in UMNO in return agreed not to interfere with the economic activities of non-Malays and at the same time undertook to respect the cultural and ethnic rights of non-Malays including the provision of liberal citizenship. This quid pro quo arrangement was the essential element that cemented the relationship between the élites in the Alliance. The nation-building model of the Alliance coalition was significant in a number of respects. First, by recognizing differences, the coalition ensured that all ethnic groups had a stake in the political and economic system. Second, although the ethnic model provided some

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significant concessions to Malays by according primacy to their political and cultural dominance, at the same time it ensured that the cultural rights of other ethnic groups would be protected under the formula. Third, the model revealed that élite co-operation among the different ethnic groups could be normatively applied to bring about political and economic stability.[1]

The Alliance nation-building model by recognizing and paying attention to ethnicity succeeded in providing political and economic stability for Malaysia for twelve years. If the model had not paid attention to this difference, it is doubtful whether the county could have attained significant economic development for more than a decade. While the ethnic consociational model of nation-building can be credited for its ability to manage ethnic relations and ethnic conflict, it could not escape facing serious political and social problems. The model could not be sustained for long because of the strains within and without. Internal challenges from those segments who were not comfortable with the concessions and bargains of the élites reduced the effectiveness of the coalition. The coalition was essentially very élitist; it paid no attention to problems emanating from ethnic, social, and class dimensions. As time went on, the gap between expectations of the élite and the masses widened further. It was the external challenge of the opposition parties during the 1969 elections that dealt a death knell for the Alliance's consociational nation-building model. In a more specific sense, it was the 1969 racial riots that ended the consociational model of nation-building for Malaysia (Ramasamy 1980).

The nation-building formula that emerged after the 1969 racial riots has been described by some scholars as the continuation of the earlier consociational model. However, a closer examination of the politics of the larger Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition would indicate that the configuration of politics has changed quite dramatically. Ian Lustick contrasted two kinds of political models found in multi-ethnic societies; one is the consociational model based on some form of equality between the major social segments and the other is the control model in which a dominant group imposes its will on smaller and weaker groups (Lustick 1979). In the case of Malaysia, the political model that was adopted in the aftermath of the racial riots could be described as a model of control.

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As we are aware, the occurrence of racial riots between Malays and non-Malays (principally Chinese) and the subsequent suspension of Parliament provided grounds for the Malay élite within UMNO to come out with a political formula to address Malay grievances. According to the UMNO élite, the riots were indications that Malays were not satisfied with their progress and that future politics in Malaysia should firmly address Malay grievances. Thus, with this in mind, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to resolve the economic woes of the Malays; and to prevent challenges to the government, constitutional amendments were passed in Parliament to prevent questions and discussions on Malay special rights, the position of Malay rulers, and the status of the Malay language (Milne and Mauzy 1978; Ganguly 1997).

The earlier consociational model could hardly be described as democratic, but nonetheless, it contained mechanisms that allowed for some measure of autonomy of the different ethnic groups. Even though UMNO had the monopoly of politics, the Chinese by their dominant economic role had the means to veto policies and suggestions made by UMNO. Thus in the Alliance coalition, it would be difficult to adopt a policy without the consent of any one party. However, the scenario changed with the formation of the BN and the emergence of UMNO as the most powerful and dominant party. It was the emergence of UMNO in championing Malay rights and privileges on the grounds of their *bumiputera* status that created problems for other ethnic political parties in the Barisan coalition. The new form of politics that emerged did not totally discard the interests of non-Malays, but made them secondary to the larger interests of Malays. Therefore the kind of inter-ethnic bargaining and compromise that was so essential for the success of the earlier consociational model became less and less relevant under the hegemonic politics of Malays.

Presently, UMNO's near exclusive pursuit of the objective of Malay hegemony is the main problematic of the present nation-building model in Malaysia. Since the 1970s, it has been UMNO's predominant role in championing the rights and privileges of Malays on the grounds of their indigenous status that has sowed dissensions among sections of the non-Malays. It is not that non-Malays are excluded from political power, but their role has been diminished in terms of contributing effectively to the

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process of nation-building. Non-Malay political parties within the BN basically function without any real power; bargaining and compromise does not exist in any real sense. What is decided by UMNO as a policy or directive normally obtains the endorsement of non-Malay political élites. The present brand of coalition politics pays some attention to the interests of non-Malays as long as they do not challenge or contradict with the ethnic and cultural dominance of Malays.

The concept of Malay dominance or hegemony has endowed the present government under the firm domination of UMNO to embark on an aggressive pro-Malay policy. Malay hegemony under the present nation-building model means the following things: Malay domination in the public sector, special privileges for Malays in the educational and economic realms, generous allocation of loans and scholarship for Malay students, special education programmes for Malays, the generous promotion of Malay culture and religion, and others. These privileges accorded to Malays under the existing nation-building model has meant also the discrimination of non-Malays in the public sector, reduced intake into universities, denial of scholarship and loans, difficulty in competing with Malays for business-related projects, and a reduction in the space for the promotion of the ethnic and cultural rights of non-Malays. The recent declaration that Malaysia is an Islamic state has further complicated things for non-Malays or non-Muslims. Such a declaration not only questioned the multiracial and multi-religious aspects of the country, but also set in motion a myopic political process that tends to limit the cultural and religious space for non-Muslims. There is a growing feeling among non-Muslims that the present system does not serve to protect their genuine cultural and ethnic interests and that the nation-building project that once held such a promise might have gone astray to serve the narrow political interests of the Malay élite in UMNO.

UMNO's over-zealous pursuit of the Malay hegemonic formula has been constrained by two important factors. The first has to do with the role of PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia) that has sought to garner Malay/Muslim support on the basis of an Islamic formula. Following the ouster of Anwar Ibrahim, PAS managed to obtain considerable support from Malays throughout the peninsula. In the last general elections, it not only managed to capture the two states of Kelantan and Terengganu;

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but it also made serious inroads into some of the Malay dominated states. While UMNO might pretend to be the champion of the Malays, it cannot claim the sole monopoly of Malay representation. PAS is there to contest the Malay hegemonic pretensions of UMNO not on the grounds of ethnicity but based on its Islamic credentials. The other obstacle to UMNO's hegemonic formula is the dependence of the economy on foreign and local Chinese capital. Given this structural factor, there are definite limits to what extent UMNO can push its hegemonic formula without undermining the larger requirements of a dependent economy. In the final analysis, the concept of Malay hegemony seems also a convenient cloak for UMNO to hide the class nature of its policies and programmes that have hardly benefited the Malay subaltern classes in the urban and rural areas. It also serves to overshadow the symbiotic relationship between the party and those who have benefited tremendously by virtue of their political and class links.[2]

Victimization of Indian Malaysians

The shift from a consociationalism to a control model of politics in the aftermath of the 1969 racial riots has been particularly hard on numerically weaker ethnic communities in the country. Indians constituting about 8 per cent of the population have been affected by the pro-Malay policies of the regime. Although the Chinese have been affected in a political sense, their superior material strength have mitigated the worst effects of the Malay hegemonic model. However, Indians being numerically small and economically weak have to put up with the full brunt of government policies that prioritize Malay interests.

The change in power relations in the BN coalition to the advantage of UMNO has posed serious difficulties for the effective representation of ethnic groups such as Indians. Given the absence of inter-élite bargaining and compromise, the MIC has been unable to effectively articulate the concerns and anxieties of the Indians. Furthermore, given the dependence of the party on UMNO, there is very little the party can do independently for the community. Through its dependent relations and by cultivating strong personal friendship with UMNO leaders, the MIC seeks to provide representation to the Indian community. It is this methodology of representation that has allowed the party to obtain minor

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concessions from time to time, thus contributing to the belief that it is doing something for the community after all. The adoption of this political strategy has been made possible by a number of developments such as the uninterrupted political control of the government by the present ethnic coalition, minimal changes to the leadership composition, the rise of UMNO as the superordinate party within the coalition, and not the least the gradual dependence of other component parties on UMNO for favours, resolutions of intra-party problems, and more importantly, to ward off opposition within and without (Ramasamy 2001).

The MIC might be a weak party within the racial coalition and its survival in Malaysian politics depends very much on UMNO. Nevertheless, the problems faced by Indians in obtaining effective representation cannot be solely blamed on UMNO or the nature of inter-ethnic politics within the BN coalition. The MIC leadership is to some extent responsible for the present political problems faced by the Indian community. Although the party might be dependent on UMNO, in so far as the Indian community is concerned it is highly authoritarian and there is a big gap between the leadership and the rank and file. There are a number of reasons as to why the party has not been effective in boldly articulating the aspirations of the community. Apart from over-dependence of the leadership on UMNO at both the national and local levels, the presence of authoritarian leadership means that there is very little consultation between the leadership and the ordinary rank and file. Decisions are often made without any consultation, party meetings and annual assemblies are meant for obtaining the endorsement of decisions already taken rather for holding healthy debates about issues affecting the community. Within the party there is little or no opposition to the national leaders, however, what you have is the steady development of sycophancy, the art of pleasing and humouring leaders.

Although the MIC is weak and beholden to UMNO for its continued existence within the racial coalition, it cannot be totally written off yet. It still has some attraction for certain segments of the Indian population, particularly members of the working class located in plantations and certain urban areas. The fact that the party is the only vehicle for Indian representation in the government and that the fact

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that the government only consults the MIC on Indians matters, provides some relevance for the party in representing Indian affairs. It might not be in a position to make bold demands, but it tries to seek a few concessions for the community from time to time. Of course, the continued limited relevance of the party must be seen in the larger context of the absence of other viable political alternatives for Indians. More importantly, it must be remembered that the MIC is not a just an Indian party, but a party for Tamils, those who constitute the majority of the Indian population in the country. Virtually all the important leaders of the party are Hindu Tamils, well versed in the usage of Tamil language. The MIC might be a conservative and non-effective party, but its emphasis on the Tamil language, Tamil schools, culture, and tradition provides some kind of limited attraction for some sections of the Tamil community (Ramasamy 2001).

Nation-building is essentially a contested concept; while the government in Malaysia might have the political power and legitimacy to impose a particular model on the population, this does not mean there are no other alternative models of nation-building or representational formulae. In the case of the Indians, they are represented in the representation formula provided by the BN ethnic coalition. The formula offered by the BN as the basis for ethnic representation has been challenged mainly by opposition parties and non-governmental organizations. The former has sought to provide alternative forms of representation for the purpose of nation-building whereas the latter has criticized the BN formula for not respecting democracy and human rights. Opposition political parties such as PAS, the DAP (Democratic Action Party), and KeADILan (Parti KeADILan Nasional or Justice Party of Malaysia) have sought to provide alternative forms of representation. In so far as the Indians are concerned, the only opposition party that has some appeal to them is the DAP. Its ideology of "Malaysian Malaysia" calling for an end to racial discrimination and equal treatment of all Malaysians irrespective of ethnic background has been quite attractive to Indians. It is not that alternative forms of political representation have much appeal, but the very presence of these discourses provide opportunities for Malaysians to contest the dominant form of representation found within the ruling ethnic coalition.

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Economic Deprivation

The process of nation-building depends on a number of factors. While political accommodation and effective representation of ethnic groups are important within the realm of national politics, economic development is equally important. The case of the Indians illustrate that the nation-building project under the present regime has not seriously and honestly addressed some of their pressing economic problems. In comparison with the Chinese and Malays, the Indians are far behind in the economic race. While the government cannot be entirely blamed for the economic deprivation of the Indians, it has also not helped alleviate the problems faced by the community. The emphasis on pro-Malay policies and programmes, discrimination of non-Malays in the provision of economic opportunities and bureaucratic inertia have served to prevent Indians from moving forward.

Indian ownership of the national economy is around 1.5 per cent compared with about 25 per cent or more for the Malays and 40 per cent for the Chinese. Between 1957 and 1990, the Indian share of the national economy stagnated around merely 1 per cent; it only increased by 0.5 per cent in 1995. However, this slight rise in Indian equity was not the result of the total economic mobilization of the community, but rather depended on the economic activities of a few Indian entrepreneurs. A few years back the government announced its commitment to raise Indian equity by 3 per cent by 2010 — a gesture welcomed by Indian groups. However, whether Indians can attain this particular target in a few years' time remains doubtful. The absence of a level playing field and the presence of a government that is not sympathetic to the problems faced by the community might possibly derail the achievement of this particular target. Unless and until systematic steps are adopted to end racial discrimination, there is no way ethnically powerless groups like Indians can make any meaningful headway in the economic realm. As far as the community is concerned, the enrichment of a few Indians might not make much of an impact in terms of improving the overall economic performance of the community. What is required are political, social, and economic conditions that will provide a conducive atmosphere for capital accumulation among members of the working class.

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Indians are fully aware that without access to wealth and opportunities on the basis of fair competition, they will remain an economically and politically disadvantaged community. Without the necessary political support and in the absence of a level playing field, working-class Indians find it impossible to venture into business and other forms of entrepreneurial activities. Ordinary Indians — those without the necessary connections and network — find it difficult to obtain licences and bid for contracts and tenders. Since government policy requires these to be reserved for Malays, opportunities are denied to Indians. In a very rudimentary sense, even licences for garbage collection and disposal are denied to Indians on the grounds of their ethnicity. If at all Indians managed to obtain some business contracts, the chances are that these came through the form of sub-contracts, with a major reduction in revenue. Public sector tenders, contracts, and business licences are virtually beyond the reach of ordinary Indians. Governmental contracts emanating from the privatization projects have been exclusively reserved for Malays, especially those who have close links with the ruling party. Lack of capital and the necessary economic links serves as obstacles for Indians to participate effectively in the private sector.[3]

It is the politics of Malay hegemony that puts formidable obstacles for Indians to play a significant role in the economic development of the country. As long as Malay interests and concerns are going to be prioritized under the banner of Malay hegemony, it would be impossible for Indians to obtain a fair chance. The prominent role played by a handful of wealthy entrepreneurs would not make much difference to the overall progress of the community. It is not that Indians lack the necessary skills and knowledge, but it is the particular kind of racial politics in the country that prevents from fully utilizing the opportunities. Discussions with some Indian entrepreneurs provide the impression that the main problem facing them is not so much the absence of skills or expertise, but rather the bureaucratic and political obstacles that have been instituted to promote the interests of one particular ethnic group.

It is not that the Indians want some kind of affirmative action programme to boost their level of economic participation; what they want is the systematic removal of the ethnic and bureaucratic obstacles that stand in the way of their progress. In other words, they want

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governmental intervention to ensure that there is a level playing field so that anyone could compete on the grounds of merit and hard work. But alas, it is not clear whether the government, which is committed to championing the interests of one particular ethnic group, will do this or not. To date, despite many forums and recommendations submitted by some political parties and non-governmental organizations, the government has refused to examine the Indian dilemma in a fair and objective manner. It rather sad that the only Indian representative in the government, the MIC, has been rather reluctant to raise Indians issues in the cabinet. As discussed, its minor role in the government, its dependence on UMNO, fear of outside Indian parties coming into the coalition and the lack of a decent leadership has deprived the community of crucial political support for the purpose of economic advancement.

In comparison with the other ethnic groups, the Indian community has the weakest middle class. During the period of the NEP, middle formation among the Malays and Chinese registered double-digit growth while the growth of the Indian middle class was only a single-digit one (Crouch 1996). Of course, Indians have a marked presence in the field of medicine and law; Indians constitute 33 per cent of medical doctors and about 25 per cent of lawyers in the country. However, beyond these categories, Indian participation is rather small in administrative, technical, and clerical categories. Furthermore, Indians have a big presence in the working-class categories for rural and urban areas, this suggesting that the community is largely composed of members of the working class. Given the class structure of the Indian community it could be assumed that it has not undergone rapid class differentiation as much as the Chinese and to some extent, the Malays. It is the absence of this differentiation arising out of the social and economic transformation that has prevented the community from having a developed and strong middle class. There is middle formation amongst the Indians, but the rate of formation is much slower compared with the Malays and Chinese, which indicates differential ethnic impact.

Cultural Alienation

The present theoretical interest in nation-building seems very much focused on trying to strike a healthy balance between what are legitimate

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cultural elements of ethnic communities and what are required for the promotion of inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding. However, the present nation-building process in Malaysia seems not to pay attention to this important requirement, as the case of Indians will reveal that the nation-building process seems indifferent to not only their political and economic concerns but also their cultural interests. It will be argued that the need on the part of UMNO to construct and sustain Malay hegemony on the basis of ethnicity and religion is the main reason non-Muslim groups are facing numerous problems in terms of freely pursuing their ethnic and cultural interests. In this respect, it can be said that the nation-building model instituted pays more attention to the cultural requirements of one group at the expense of other groups.

The Malay hegemonic model is mainly responsible for the emergence of cultural alienation among the non-Muslim Indians in the country. In other words, there is growing belief among non-Muslim Indians that the government is not doing enough to protect and advance their religious and linguistic interests. Prioritization of Malay ethnic interests, the incorporation of Islamic values in the administration of the country, and lately the announcement that Malaysia as an Islamic state have induced much fear and concern among non-Muslim Indians. The overall effect of these moves is that there is less tolerance and understanding among Muslims in general with regard to the religious and ethnic practices of non-Muslims. It is the Islamization initiative that is mainly responsible for certain government departments imposing strict restrictions on the construction of non-Muslim places of worship. Numerous examples could be cited to show how the authorities citing one reason or another have prevented the construction of non-Muslim places of worship. More tragically, over the last two decades or so, many non-Muslim places of worship such as Hindu temples, Chinese/Buddhist shrines, and others have been removed or demolished on the grounds that they were illegal constructions and interfered with the development plans of the local and state authorities. To date, a large number of Hindu temples have been removed by the authorities in states such as Kedah, Perak, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan. Only a few have been offered alternative sites.[4]

Non-Muslims in general are not very convinced that the removal of

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the places of their worship was an administrative decision. For instance, some of the Hindu temples that were removed or demolished had been in existence for more fifty years; some temples had a history of over eighty years. The authorities are right in saying that these places were not properly registered, but then investigation reveals that many of them were denied registration for many reasons. To some extent it is true that some places of worship could have interfered with the development plans of the government, but surely an amicable way could have been found to relocate the places of worship without hurting and humiliating the feelings of Indians and other non-Muslims. The aggressive manner in which temple demolition and removals have taken place indicates that the authorities were not the least bothered about the cultural sensitivities of non-Muslims. However, it cannot be accepted that hundreds of temples and shrines that were forcibly removed or demolished were obstacles to development. The real reason for the removal of many of these temples and shrines must be seen in the larger context of Islamization and how the state agencies composed largely of Malay/Muslims have become less and less tolerant of the cultural and religious practices of non-Muslims in general. Developmental interference and lack of registration were mainly excuses invented to justify the insensitive removal of non-Muslim places of worship. The slow but sure removal of many of these places is a testimony to the nature of development of politics in the country. These acts of removal of places of worship cannot be dismissed as accidental, but deliberate, systematic, and selective to ensure that they do not contradict with the general process of Islamization.

What concerns non-Muslims in the country is not so much the politics of PAS intending to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state, but rather the politics of the ruling regime that seeks to revive its popularity among Malay/Muslims by playing the Islamic card. The recent announcement by the Prime Minister that Malaysia is not just an Islamic state but a fundamentalist one caught Malaysians in general by surprise. Such a remark not only casts doubt about the nature of the Malaysian secular constitution, but also raises questions about the sincerity of the government in maintaining and perpetuating cordial inter-ethnic ties. The remark by the Prime Minister was probably aimed at slowing down

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the momentum of PAS in building its base amongst Malay-Muslims. However, in doing so, the Prime Minister had raised anxieties amongst the non-Muslims as to the nature of politics in the country. It could be argued that such a declaration was premature in many ways. It came at a time of global war against terrorism initiated by the United States and its allies. Malaysia is one of the firm supporters of this global coalition of forces against terrorism. However, the government, despite being on the side of the anti-terrorist coalition, failed to impress the international community about the multiracial and multi-religious nature of the country. Such a move would have gone a long way in dispelling certain allegations that some of the organizations in the country have links with some of the terrorist groups (Ramasamy 2002).

Language and Education

Fear of losing their vernacular system of education is foremost on the minds of the Indians and Chinese. The educational system in Malaysia allows for the coexistence of two systems of integrated education: the national schools system with Malay as the medium of instruction and the vernacular system with Chinese and Tamil as the medium of instruction. Both the respective communities have always harboured the fear that right from the time of political independence, UMNO politicians were not very keen in allowing for the function of the vernacular system. The nature of consociational politics, the large presence of non-Malays in the country and the dependence of the ethnic coalition on the political support of non-Malays allowed for the continuation of the vernacular school system. However, lately, there are two particular developments that have raised concerns about the vernacular school system in the country. One is related to the introduction of the concept of Vision Schools and the other is the proposal to introduce the teaching of science and mathematics in English in both school systems.

The aim of the Vision Schools is to build an integrated primary school complex in one particular area that would contain the national primary and vernacular schools. It is argued by the government that by bringing the national and vernacular schools to one particular area or compound, opportunities would develop for children of various ethnic

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groups to interact and share their experiences. Such developments could contribute to a better understanding and tolerance among the younger generation. The Chinese and Indians do not object to the concept of Vision Schools; rather they object to the way the different schools will be organized and maintained in one particular compound. Some sections of these two particular communities are of the opinion that there is strong possibility that once the integrated school system takes shape, the national schools will tend to enjoy more autonomy and power in comparison with the vernacular schools. Thus, given the unequal nature of the integrated school, there will be a tendency on the part of vernacular schools to lose their significance. It is feared that the Vision Schools might ultimately contribute to the closing down of vernacular schools.

Much more controversial than the Vision Schools concept is the announcement by the government that science and mathematics in all primary schools will be taught in English in the near future. While there was not much opposition from the Malays and Indians, the Chinese, particularly those in the non-governmental educational movements, opposed this introduction. Eventually, the government accepted the concurrence of the four Chinese parties that it will go ahead with the introduction with some modifications with the assurance that teaching in Chinese would not be completely replaced. However, the compromise achieved by the Chinese parties on the introduction of English has not been very pleasing to the Chinese community. Although the MIC endorsed the government policy on the introduction of English language, many Indian organizations were not very pleased. Like the Chinese, the Indians feel that that the introduction of English to replace Chinese and Tamil as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics might affect the very functioning of the vernacular systems. In a more specific sense, there is fear that Tamil as the medium of instruction might be eventually phased out, spelling disaster for the Tamil school system.

Religion and language are important elements of ethnic identification and dignity. But as far as Indians are concerned, the pro-Malay policies of the regime in general and Islamization in particular poses serious problems to the survival of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity in the country. The declaration that Malaysia is an Islamic country and attempts at introducing and sustaining Islamic institution have narrowed

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the space for the practice of other religions. Recent exercises in the removal of non-Muslim places of worship in the country bears testimony to the way in which the government is managing ethnic diversity. Intolerance on the part of the Malay-dominated government to the existence of the vernacular system of education is seriously eroding the confidence of the Chinese and Indians in the viability of the national political system.

Social Problems

The growing social problems amongst the Indians bear testimony to the neglect they experience politically, economically, and culturally under the present government. Over the last ten years or so, it has been observed that the frequency of Indian involvement in violent activities have increased quite dramatically. One often reads about Indian involvement in gang fights, murders, and rapes, for instance. Although the local press tends to over-dramatize Indian involvement in violence, recent statistics do not paint an alarming picture of Indian involvement. It is not that other ethnic groups are not involved in violence, but the nature and degree of their involvement differ from that of the Indians. It is very popular to argue that the cause of Indian involvement in crimes is the influence exerted by Tamil movies. There is a tendency not to see the phenomenon of Indian engagement in criminal activities from a sociological perspective. It would be difficult to attribute Indian involvement in crime to the influence of Tamil movies. Tamil movies with their violent scenes might aggravate the situation, but they are hardly the cause. Alternatively, Indian propensity to engage in crimes must be seen from the broader context of rapid urbanization, the movement of Indians from plantations to urban areas, the phenomenon of racial discrimination, the fragmentation of community life, and not least the lack of power in the community to do something worthwhile.

Of course, it would be inaccurate to say that all Indians are involved in criminal and undesirable social activities; rather, it is a particular social segment of the Indian society that is more prone to engagement in violence — members of urban working-class Indians. It is my argument that rapid urbanization and commercialization in the last two or three

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decades have brought about far-reaching changes to the Malaysian social scenario. With the sale and fragmentation of plantation land, thousands of Indians have moved to urban areas in search of better jobs and opportunities. However, migrating to urban areas has its own share of problems. Unable to afford decent housing, many Indians have become squatters on land owned by the government and private agencies. These squatter settlements lack basic facilities such as piped water and electricity. It is not that the Indians cannot obtain jobs in urban areas and chances are that their earnings will be higher than those received by plantation workers. However, given the high cost associated with urban living, an improved income might not make much of a difference in terms of purchasing power.

It is the exposure to urban living in socio-economically depressed areas, the nature of interaction with their fellow members, the lack of a sense of community, the discrimination they face in getting jobs and business licences, and other problems that contribute to a situation where the Indians tend to form gangs or groups to protect themselves and to cope with the helpless situation they are in. Moreover, the realization that other ethnic groups have benefited from the government's policies and that they have been left out brings about a sense of frustration and despair. Thus, unable to enter into the mainstream society, many poor Indians are left with no choice but to form a close unit among their friends and are ultimately led to engage in criminal activities. But strangely enough, even if Indians are aware that they are the victims of racial discrimination, somehow or other, their frustrations do not seem to be directed at those who are responsible for the cause of their problems. Instead, the conflict within them takes on an internal dimension, and Indians seem to be fighting and killing each other. In other words, the conflict is among the victims themselves, which can be considered fratricidal violence.

The popular opinion that Indians have a natural affinity to engage in criminal acts seems to have been accepted without much questioning, and this has dangerous implications. The local press and some Indian organizations are mainly responsible for portraying this kind of image. Some political parties such as the MIC and its related organizations have sought to capitalize on this to gain funds to conduct research to

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ascertain the causes of social unrest among the Indians, especially in the urban areas. Although it is doubtful that these organizations can come up with any major sociological analysis of the Indian situation, the fact remains that the Indian community has been labelled as being very crime-prone. Over the years a number of Indians suspected of being involved in criminal activities have been shot by the police. A few Indians detained for questioning have died mysteriously while under police lock-up. Although some Indian-based organizations and some family members of the vicitms have questioned the police and asked for the government to institute commissions of inquiry, nothing concrete has resulted. Government inaction provides some indication that the police have been given the tacit approval to take drastic actions against criminals (Aziz 2002; Wong 2002; PRIM 2002). Indians are generally frustrated and unhappy that the police, which is supposed to be objective in the discharge of its responsibility, have been on a shooting spree without proper investigation. The families of victims have never been given the opportunity to contradict the versions provided by the police.[5]

More than a year back, Indians in and around Kampung Medan, Kuala Lumpur, were subject to vicious attacks by some vigilante Malay groups. As a result of these attacks, which were apparently precipitated by some ethnic misunderstanding, about six Indians died and many suffered injuries. Although the conflict was a localized one, lack of effective police action made it possible for some vigilante Malay/Muslim groups to launch vicious attacks against innocent Indians found in the vicinity. Many of those who died and those injured were Indians not from the Kampung Medan area but who happened to be near the area, either travelling or returning from work. The Kampung Medan attack was a major tragedy for the Indian community. The government through the MIC had made some promises of assistance to the victims and their families, but the nature of the assistance promised is not clear. The call by the opposition parties such as the DAP and others for the government to set up a royal commission of inquiry was brushed aside by the government. This particular tragedy might be only confined to a certain section of the country, but what emerged from this was the fact that the Indians were very vulnerable to attacks by certain fanatical groups within the majority community. Other incidents have highlighted the fact that

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the Indians can count very little upon the police or the government agencies to provide the necessary security from blatant racist attacks.[6]

The social problems encountered by Indians are not entirely their own doing. They emanate from the larger context of the marginalization and discrimination of the community on the grounds of ethnic differences with the majority community. Some Indians are involved in criminal activities, but so are some Malays and Chinese. But why are the Indians alone blamed? Is it because they have an inborn natural affinity to engage in crime or because they have no economic or political clout? The recent spate of shootings of Indians and the mysterious death of some of them in detention points to some kind of tacit approval on the part of the authorities. Apart from the usual police version that those who were shot were members of gangs and had possessed arms, no one is really sure about the criminality of those shot or injured. Unless there is an avenue for the contestation of the police findings, the public will never know the truth. There are grounds to believe on the basis of testimonies provided by their family members and legal counsellors that the police have shot many innocent Indians. The Kampung Medan attacks provide the best illustration of how a small and weak community, such as the Indians, are subject to terrorist attacks by some sections of the majority community on the grounds of racial and religious intolerance.

Conclusion

The case of the Indians illustrates that the Malaysian nation-building model based on the prioritization of the ethnic and cultural interests of the dominant ethnic group — the Malays — poses serious problems for national integration and the survival of ethnically small groups. The transition from consociational to control politics in the political history of Malaysia has resulted in the emergence of UMNO as the champion and defender of the ethnic and cultural interests of the Malays. Such a move meant that the government under the control of UMNO would not consider the interests of other ethnic groups as important as those of the Malays. Moreover, the nature of politics in the larger ethnic coalition of the BN under the hegemonic domination of UMNO casts doubts about the ability of non-Malay political parties to effectively

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represent and articulate the concerns of their respective ethnic groups. In the case of the Indians, its sole representative in the coalition, the MIC, has lost all effectiveness in representing them. The party, by being too dependent on UMNO for favours and concessions, has ceased to function in a manner that is expected of it. Indians are perturbed not only about their dwindling political strength but also about their miserable economic situation and cultural alienation. There is no way that the present nation-building model premised on ethnic and religious chauvinism could be honestly and fairly expected to address the myriad problems faced by the numerically smaller and weaker ethnic nationalities such as the Indians.

NOTES

1. Lijphart (1977) is of the opinion that the consociational formula of élite co-operation could be utilized as a normative principle in multi-ethnic settings to bring about political stability.
2. A closer scrutiny of the Malay hegemonic model would indicate that it has a definite class bias. This is why UMNO has been criticized for favouring those Malays who have good political links.
3. Based on my recent interviews with some Indian businessmen.
4. Interviews with Indian community leaders.
5. Parti Rakyat Insan Malaysia (PRIM) has taken up the case of those Indians shot by the police and those who have mysteriously died while under police detention. It has sent numerous appeals to the government to investigate the phenomenon of political brutality, but to date there has been no response.
6. Indian-based organizations such as the PRIM and Group of Concerned Indian Citizens (GCI) were responsible for exposing the injustice suffered by those killed in the Kampung Medan racial attacks.

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CHAPTER 8

The Majority's Sacrifices and Yearnings: Chinese-Singaporeans and the Dilemmas of Nation-Building

EUGENE K.B. TAN

The history of the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia has been one of trials, tribulations, as well as of economic success amidst varying degrees of discrimination and acceptance in their adopted countries. Beginning with the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), China's interest towards Nanyang (South Seas) reached its high point during the reign of Ming emperor Zhu Di. Commerce and trading activity in the region and the ambitious quest for an enlarged suzerainty saw eunuch Admiral Zheng He's (Cheng Ho's) famous voyages to the region.[1] The subsequent arrival of the European colonialists, starting with the Portuguese, led to rapid economic expansion and an influx of Chinese and Indian migrant labour to service the growing demands for labour and entrepreneurship in the colonial lands, a phenomenon that reached its peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was responsible for much of the heterogeneity of Malaysia and Singapore today.

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Thus, the geopolitical-ethnic uniqueness of Singapore is not a recent development. The British were conscious of its geopolitical centrality despite the stereotypical description of Singapore as a "sleepy Malay fishing village".[2] In a matter of decades from Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' founding in 1819, Singapore was transformed from an indigenous Malay enclave into a Chinese-majority entity.[3] Its rise as an important entrepôt coincided with the themes of discrimination, ethnic violence, and pogroms against the ethnic Chinese in other parts of Southeast Asia.[4] The constant challenge faced by naturalized ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia was, and remains, to maintain their ethnic identity without doubts being cast on their commitment to the newly adopted homelands and the region.[5] Similarly, Singapore's Chinese exceptionalism needs to be managed within the intricacies of ethnic relations in a multi-ethnic society and the latent regional geopolitical sensitivities against the backdrop of the putative rise of the regional hegemon, China.[6]

In this chapter, Singaporean "Chineseness" refers to the trend in which increasing importance and prominence is placed — in form, if not in substance — on Chinese language and culture within political, economic, and socio-cultural discourse in Singapore.[7] Chineseness, as conceptually used in this chapter, embodies the quality of increasing importance and higher profile accorded to the ethnic Chinese racial-cultural identity and value system in Singapore society. This is a discourse that is being moulded in the context of transnational, especially economic, processes bringing Chinese-Singaporeans into increasing contact with China and the Chinese diaspora. There is the acute consciousness that this is an era characterized by Greater China's rise in economic, political, and cultural importance.

On the economic front, it is identified by the close relationship between Singapore and China, facilitated by the belief that co-ethnics' transnational transactions in the political, economic, and cultural spheres are exclusively advantaged. Other indicators include not only warm and cordial political ties but also closer linkages on multiple fronts with China, officially regarded as the cultural motherland of Chinese-Singaporeans. The overall manifestation is one of the ethnic Chinese-Singaporean nation-space gradually increasing within the domestic political-ideological terrain. This phenomenon is predicated on the patent need

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for Singapore to retain economic and cultural relevancy *vis-à-vis* China.

This chapter argues that the Chinese-Singaporean contribution to the growth and development of the Singapore nation-state has been significant, especially in the fledgeling years. The Chinese-Singaporean contribution to nation-building, primarily in the de-emphasis on Chinese identity, has been critical to nation-building in the first two decades of independence. However, with the focus on economic prosperity and the role of cultural values for sustained growth and prosperity, the dominant theme of a multiracial approach has been gradually diluted by the selective over-emphasis on Confucianism, Asian Values, and Chineseness since the late 1970s. The aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 seems to have driven the urgency with which the "common space" in Singapore has to be enlarged. Yet, the commitment to genuine multiracialism can be undermined by the subtle rise of Chineseness, which would inevitably arouse perceptions of ethnic insecurity among the minority races.

Subsequently, the increased emphasis by the government on the return to one's cultural roots (especially for the ethnic Chinese) resulting in increased assertiveness in the promotion of ethnic indicators, driven in part by political and economic motives, has unwittingly heightened ethnic consciousness. As the dominant majority in Singapore, the ethnic Chinese have to be mindful of the impact of their potentially dominant and assertive cultural-identity discourse on the minorities. As integration is a two-way process, the Chinese-Singaporeans should take the lead and continually strive to reach out to and assure the minorities that the multiracial ethos remains an axiom of faith.

The Contextual Setting

Singapore is the only country in Southeast Asia in which the ethnic Chinese population constitutes a majority. It is also the only Southeast Asian country in which the (originally) migrant people dominate the political, economic, and cultural life. Mauzy and Milne have described this as the "'double minority' setting: the Chinese are a majority in Singapore, but a minority in the region; the Malays are a minority in Singapore but a strong majority in the immediate region".[8]

Under the rigid Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others (CMIO) racial

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classification inherited from the British, slightly more than three-quarters of Singaporeans are classified as ethnic Chinese, with about 15 per cent Malays and 6 per cent Indians.[9] A cornerstone of Singapore's multiracial policy is the political imperative to maintain this delicate racial composition. This racial make-up, it is argued, provides for ethnic equilibrium and the required political substratum and stability for Singapore's nation-building and prosperity. What is left unsaid is the subscription to the belief that "cultural DNA", especially of the ethnic Chinese, is a critical ingredient for the transmission of the core values for continued political stability and economic success.[10]

The ethnic Chinese demographic predominance is also an urgent political necessity. The average number of ethnic Chinese children born has precipitously declined from above-replacement level to below-replacement level in a short span of twenty years — from 3.4 in 1980 to 2.8 in 1990 to 2.5 in 2000. The average Chinese household size fell from 4.8 persons to 4.2 to 3.6 in the corresponding period.[11] This is contrasted with the higher birth rates of the Malay population. The 2000 population census reveals that the Malays are over-represented in the various age groups up to twenty-four years of age — averaging about 19 to 20 per cent of the total population.[12]

In order to preserve the racial status quo and to ensure continued economic vibrancy, earlier efforts to tweak the fertility policies were "implicitly bifurcated along racial/ethnic lines" with the implicit aim of increasing the reproductive capacity of the ethnic Chinese.[13] This continues in the present two-pronged strategy: the first prong employs immigration through the import of skilled talent from ethnic Chinese sources such as China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to top up the declining population of local Chinese.[14] The mainland Chinese population living, working, or studying in Singapore has also seen noticeable increases.[15] The second prong seeks to have the less educated Singaporeans to have small families.[16]

The failed political union between Singapore and Malaysia (1963–65), mainly over Singapore's rigorous objections to the federal government's goal of an ethnic state, viz., a Malay-Malaysia, provided the foundational baptism for a multiracial ethos in newly independent Singapore. In the fledgeling nation-building efforts in the aftermath of

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Separation, the government consciously sought to build a new multiracial society from the ashes of the failed "Malaysian Malaysia" project and develop a "Singaporean Singapore" identity, while symbolically recognizing the special position of the indigenous Malays.

Singapore's fledgeling multiracialism was characterized by the de-emphasis on "Chineseness". The government was acutely aware of the strategic need to avoid being seen as the "third China" and was careful in the outward display of its ethnic profile and disposition. As "the centre of Overseas Chinese achievement in South-East Asia"[17], Singapore, in deference to its neighbours' feelings, delayed the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with China until after Sino-Indonesian relations were normalized in 1990.

In the first twenty years of nationhood, the government exercised care with the notion of the hyphenated Singaporean. Then Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam warned that "the price for a more impressive genealogical table would be to turn Singapore into a bloody battleground for endless racial and communal conflicts and interventionist politics by the more powerful and bigger nations from which Singaporeans had emigrated".[18] The wariness with encouraging diverse ethnic identities stemmed from the belief that a composite Singaporean identity was the *sine qua non* for the new nation-state.

In addition to English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil (the putative mother tongue languages of the three main ethnic groups) were adopted as official languages. Malay is also the sole national language in recognition of Singapore's Malay origins. English as the language of administration and commerce did not provide the Chinese majority with any linguistic advantage but it provided Singaporeans with a lingua franca to communicate with each other. A natural corollary was the establishment of a national school system to gradually replace the mixed bag of ethnic-stream schools. The impetus has been the conviction that the educational system offers the best platform for social engineering through the teaching of values, the eradication of prejudices and misconceptions, and the inculcation of respect for pluralism and diversity.

Nonetheless, beyond the virtues of multiracialism and meritocracy, the content of this work-in-progress national identity was nebulous. The formation of the putative overarching Singaporean identity preceded

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the conscious attempt to place one's ethnic identity as a secondary identifier. The state did not encourage nor suppress the various ethnic groups' identities, cultures, and religions. Similar to the British colonial practice, it was left to each ethnic group to ensure its cultural continuity using its own resources. The challenge remains: given that the ethnic Chinese comprise three-quarters of the population, how should the primary identity of a Singaporean be defined such that it resonates with the different races?

At the sidelines of this thrust towards multiracialism was the battle for ascendancy between the English-educated Chinese and the Chinese-educated Chinese. The de-emphasis on Chineseness became a bone of political contention in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the conflict was ostensibly over the relative importance of Chinese culture in the new polity, the reality was one of difference over political ideology, values, and life chances. The hold of communist ideology on the Chinese-educated Chinese was pervasive from the late 1940s up to the late-1960s, leading Lee Kuan Yew to remark:

> … it was difficult to identify good Chinese-educated candidates who would remain loyal when the communists opened fired on us [PAP] … we were fishing on the same pond as the communists, who exploited both Chinese nationalism and Marxist-Maoist ideas of egalitarianism. … Their mental terms of reference were Chinese history, Chinese parables and proverbs, the legendary success of the Chinese communist revolution as against their own frustrating life in Singapore.[19]

This cultural gulf and theme of alienation in various spheres of Singapore life persist today, albeit in new forms. Recently, Lee noted:

> A people steeped in Chinese values had more discipline, were more courteous and respectful to elders. The result was a more orderly society. When these values were diluted by an English education, the result was less vigour and discipline and more casual behaviour. Worse, the English-educated generally lacked self-confidence because they were not speaking their own native language. The dramatic confrontations between the communist-led Chinese middle school students and my own government brought home these substantial differences in culture and ideals, represented in two different value systems.[20]

For Lee Kuan Yew and his founding generation, the Chinese-educated and their stance on Chinese culture and the need to preserve Chinese

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traditions through the Chinese schools was seen as "a proletarian issue; it was plain, simple chauvinism".[21] As the ethnic Chinese community was closely associated with the nationalist and communist influence in the development of labour relations in pre-independent Singapore, labour issues became intertwined with race and ideology.[22] This juxtaposition of ethnic and ideological identities, of which Chinese identity, culture, and education were key dimensions, was firmly imprinted in the psyche of the English-educated political élites. This bruising experience formed the background to the differences between the Chinese-educated and English-educated Chinese in the subsequent years.

The government prevailed in the quest to deliberately downplay the Chineseness of Singapore and to sideline the key mobilizers of the Chinese community such as the clan associations and powerful Chinese businessmen, which had considerable resources and support to exert influence on local politics, especially on issues of culture and language.[23]

"Culture as Destiny" — The Increasing Importance of Race, Culture, and Language

The caution exercised in the state's downplaying the Chinese expression of one's genealogical roots began to relax towards the end of the 1970s. The hubris accompanying the rise of East Asian economies of Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, with their Confucian core, provided the supposed empirical support for the "culture as destiny" school. Here, culture, as a derivative of race and encoded in the "cultural DNA" of a nation-state, is seen as being critical in ensuring continued socio-political stability and sustainable economic prosperity.

This return to one's genealogical roots was also driven by the heightened concern that the Chinese-Singaporeans were becoming deculturalized. The loss of the cultural ballast was perceived as being detrimental to Singapore's long-term economic sustainability. Launched innocuously in 1979, the Speak Mandarin campaign marked the beginning of Chineseness' tentative higher profile in Singapore. It also marked the start of the government's "Asianization" policy with the emphasis being the return to one's cultural roots and heritage in the modernization drive.

The economic imperative for this emphasis on Mandarin and the

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Chinese culture subtly dovetailed with the tentative opening of Deng Xiaoping's China, heralding economic opportunities for Singapore. To benefit from business opportunities in China, the premise is that Chinese-Singaporeans must communicate effectively in Chinese, China's lingua franca. Chinese language proficiency, which could be achieved through the teaching of the Chinese language and the awareness of the cultural heritage behind it, would facilitate an intimate understanding of the Chinese psyche and enhance business prospects for Singaporeans seeking commercial opportunities in the largely untapped market in China.

Furthermore, in recent years, the increasing need for a more broad-based economic development — including nurturing hitherto neglected small and medium enterprises as internal dynamos — has resulted in ethnic Chinese economic capital being increasingly re-integrated into the economic mainstream.[24] This can be contrasted with the government's alienating of powerful and influential Chinese business community in the 1960s and 1970s through its co-option of multinational corporations and government-linked companies in the economic modernization programme.[25] This strategic economic bypass was deemed necessary as it reduced the government's dependence on the Chinese business community and concomitantly reduced the latter's political influence.[26]

The evolution of the Speak Mandarin campaign graduated from one of reducing the usage of dialects by the Chinese community to the present elevation of Mandarin as the high language of the Chinese:

> If the majority of Chinese Singaporeans use Chinese, not as the mother tongue but as a second language, not used at home and taught only in school, the nature of our society will change, and it will be for the worse …
>
> It is worth recapitulating why promoting Mandarin as a high language for Chinese Singaporeans is necessary. The reasons are both cultural and economic. The use of Mandarin will help us preserve and develop our cultural roots. Chinese Singaporeans are the proud inheritors of 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, the longest continuous civilization in human history. Chinese culture and the Chinese language give us a sense of who we are, where we came from and what we can be. This is crucial as it is easy for the young to be overwhelmed by the culture of Hollywood, so pervasive in the areas of information, education and entertainment today. The culture of a people gives its members their internal strength. Without that internal strength, we will not be able to survive disasters, political turmoil and war. If we use only English, and allow our mother tongue to degenerate into a second language, with Chinese not used at home and taught only in school, we will lose much of our internal strength and become a weak people with shallow roots.

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> There is also a powerful economic reason to promote Mandarin. The re-emergence of China will have a growing impact on world economics and world politics in the coming decades. Those who speak and write Mandarin, and understand Chinese culture, will enjoy a considerable advantage in the next century. Those who are able to master both Chinese and English at a high level will be much sought after.[27]

A complementary move was the return to importance of established Chinese schools as the centrepiece of this endeavour. Reconceptualized as the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools, the scheme was introduced in 1979 to preserve the best of the old Chinese secondary schools and to encourage good academic performance in a rich Chinese cultural environment.[28]

Larger movements within the cultural revivalism era were also launched in the late 1970s onwards. This included the introduction of an ersatz Confucianism in Singapore's political governance on the back of the landmark Goh Keng Swee education report and the Ong Teng Cheong moral education report.[29] Confucian Studies was made an approved subject under the compulsory religious knowledge programme in the mid-1980s.[30] The high-water mark of the nascent experiment with the infusion of Confucianism into Singapore political landscape was attained and reinforced by the 1991 White Paper on Singapore's Shared Values, which gave the imprimatur to the idealized honourable gentleman or *junzi* (a Confucian gentleman) as a key component of Singapore's conception of good government.

Until the onset of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the World Bank–popularized "East Asian Miracle" phenomenon provided boisterous incentive for Singapore to be the self-declared "Asian Values" spokesman.[31] Economic success and increased security encouraged a more confident and extensive assertion of Chineseness in Singapore.[32] While the Confucianist ethos mantra in Singapore polity has subsided into the background, the concern with the loss of one's cultural heritage (providing the necessary inoculation against deculturalization and Westernization), especially among the younger generation Chinese, ensures that the Asianization of Singapore continues today.

This, of course, begs the question of "Asian" values' supposed cultural universality within Asia or even Singapore for that matter. It is

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questionable whether, given the multi-ethnic make-up of Singapore, selected Confucianist values in whatever packaging would find resonance with the non-Chinese — but still "Asian" — population. Beyond the national campaigns to promote Chinese language and culture, a subtler dimension of the expanding realm of Chineseness is in the sphere of political governance. Although appearing tangential to the issues of Chinese culture and identity, the Confucian ethos is latently dominant in Singapore's political landscape and provides a fertile terrain for Singapore's *junzi*-centred and community-first style of governance.

The Singaporean push for a "communitarian" and "consensual" democracy should not be at the expense of diversity and pluralism.[33] Ironically, Singapore-style communitarianism, and its stress on cultural particularity, might well result in a fragmented society. In ensuring the maintenance of the desired value system amid economic imperatives of globalization and liberalization, the fixation with the maintenance of the cultural ballast and the utilization of a civilizational discourse highlighting the Chinese core is more likely to encourage the further distinguishing of and setting apart of ethnic, cultural, and religious values and identities.[34]

Moulding the Future Generations of Chinese Cultural Élites[35]

It is inevitable that the promotion of Chinese language, culture, and political values would require a core of Chinese cultural élites to provide the intellectual and cultural capital to drive the civilizational discourse in Singapore's nation-building efforts. The graduates of the now defunct Nanyang University (Nantah), which form a large part of the present ageing Chinese cultural élites, are declining in numbers. By 1997, although Mandarin was gaining popularity at the expense of Chinese dialects, the government expressed concern over the lack of a sufficient of pool of cultural élites who have "deep knowledge of Chinese language, culture, history, literature and traditions".[36] As a consequence, the focus is on regenerating a new core of cultural élites without the political, cultural, and emotional baggage of the earlier years. The number of SAP schools increased with the extension of the programme to primary schools as well. Yet, the concern that the catchment pool needed to be rapidly enlarged significantly persists.

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Although the Speak Mandarin campaign has succeeded in phasing out Chinese dialects with the younger generation, Chinese-Singaporeans are still not reading or writing sufficiently in Chinese. This translates to declining readership of Chinese newspapers among the younger generation.[37] Thus, the campaign's objective has been refined in recent years to promoting "Mandarin as the social language of the Chinese. The educated élite should use more Mandarin socially".[38] The focus is on expanding the use of Mandarin to include the workplace and to get Chinese Singaporeans to speak better Mandarin with the English-speaking Chinese as the target group. Complementing the Speak Mandarin campaign is the biennial Chinese Cultural Festival, which serves to highlight the "self-renewal and splendid spirit of Chinese culture … and to promote the understanding of Chinese culture".[39]

This cultural revitalization endeavour is accompanied by the belief that language is the key that unlocks the wisdom, legacy, and virtues of a 5,000 year-old civilization. The mother-tongue policy, a critical component of the bilingual education framework, is deemed critical in maintaining social discipline and facilitating economic relevancy. Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong put it succinctly:

> The Government's long-standing policy on bilingualism and learning of mother tongues in schools remains unchanged. English is and will remain our common working language … But the mother tongue gives us a crucial part of our values, roots and identity. It gives us direct access to our cultural heritage, and a world-view that complements the perspective of the English-speaking world. It provides us the ballast to face adversity and challenges with fortitude, and a sense of quiet confidence about our place in the world. Maintaining our distinctiveness and identity as an Asian society will help us to endure as a nation. This applies to all ethnic groups.

In 1999, the government announced changes to the teaching of Chinese language in schools with the twin aims of

> … reproducing a core group of Singaporeans who are steeped in the Chinese cultural heritage, history, literature and the arts. We need them to be Chinese language teachers, writers, journalists, community leaders, MPs and Ministers; and to set realistic standards in CL [Chinese language] for all pupils, including those from English-speaking homes.[40]

B.G. Lee Hsien Loong elaborated on the need for the sustained production of a Chinese cultural élite:

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> The Chinese cultural elite are an important source of strength for our multi-racial, multi-religious society. Their group instincts, political and social values, and social cohesion complement the different spirit and outlook of English educated Singaporeans. Chinese High School and Raffles Institution are both outstanding schools, but the pupils they produce are sharply of different moulds. Singapore society would be poorer, and weaker, if it had only one of the two … So the Chinese elite in Singapore must develop, and help Chinese culture to play its rightful role in shaping our cosmopolitan society and knowledge economy of the 21st century.

Supporters welcomed the efforts to promote the Chinese language and culture. This state of affairs assuaged, albeit unsatisfactorily, the concern of the Chinese-educated over the health of the Chinese language, culture, and heritage in Singapore. However, for some, the changes are superficial and do not go far enough in arresting the decline in standards. Although Mandarin is the most popular language among the Chinese, the standards leave much to be desired. Indeed, Chinese-Singaporeans in speaking Chinese are said to speak "something like Chinese", suggesting mediocre standards.[41] Furthermore, the long-term prognosis is not so optimistic with English being the language of choice among the younger generation of culturally ambivalent Chinese.

With the impending retirement of the last cohorts of Nantah-educated Chinese language teachers over the next few years, these issues of cultural markers remain a continual source of concern, which ensures their political saliency.[42] The perennial concern over the decline of the Chinese language, culture, and identity among young Chinese-Singaporeans continues to be the clarion call for the Chinese-educated and Chinese-speakers. The recent debate surrounding the bilingual approach (that is, the selective use of English to approach the Chinese language and other mother tongues) in teaching primary school beginners in the Chinese language is an indicator of the recurrent saliency of Chinese language issues.[43] Similarly, other concerns that are repeatedly flagged include the Nantah alumni's grievance over inadequate recognition of their contributions to society; the welfare of Chinese language teachers in schools; and the revitalizing of Chinese grassroots organizations such as clan associations.[44]

Criticism of this concerted effort to establish a larger pool of Chinese cultural élites centres on the argument that the same treatment and

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urgency towards cultural preservation is not readily accorded to other ethnic groups. The celebratory hubris over the Confucianist culture and values in the success of East Asia has also engendered an air of uncertainty over the minorities' ethno-cultural security. Being the main provider of Chinese cultural élites, the main criticism of SAP schools is that they are almost racially exclusive and isolated from the other races while there are no SAP-type schools for the minorities. At the same time, nation-building — while celebrating the diversity of Singapore — also requires the anchor of a national culture that is truly multi-ethnic if overarching ties to the nation-state are to be developed. Even perceptions of ethnic insecurity need to be tackled resolutely.

Coming Full Circle: Chinese Civilizational Discourse in Nation-Building

> Without such a Chinese intellectual and cultural elite, cultural transmission to the next generation will be adversely affected and we run the risk of progressively becoming a deculturalized community. This would be very dangerous. Although Singapore is a young country, we are an ancient people. Chinese Singaporeans have a cultural history of over 5,000 years. This is a precious asset and a source of great strength to Singapore. Without this cultural inheritance, Singapore could not have progressed the way it has and would not be able to survive a major crisis.[45]

The abiding belief that there is a hierarchy of cultures and that some cultures have a predisposition for success have led to Chinese culture gaining prominence in Singapore's political, economic, and cultural landscape. Of course, the process is subtle and nuanced bearing in mind the political sensitivities domestically and regionally. The evolution of the Speak Mandarin campaign has seen its progression from being an intra-ethnic exercise in building bridges across the many Chinese dialect groups, to the critical role in exploiting China's economic potential, to its significant role in the maintenance of cultural ballast, and to being the high language for Chinese-Singaporeans. Recently, the apparent insertion of a civilizational discourse into Singapore's official history has taken root.

The Sojourner in Singapore's Historiography: Sun Yat-Sen

> When we deal with China, we must have a sense of our own history and of the role that Singapore played in the Chinese revolution, which was the greatest

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> revolution in human history … But at the same time, it's important for Singaporeans to know that their ancestors made major contributions to the Chinese revolution. … In fact, Singaporeans played a bigger role in the Chinese Revolution than Hong Kongers or Taiwanese.[46]

The modern nation-state tends to project its history back to a geographic and cultural entity with a long and distinguished past in order to derive some dimension of heritage, legitimacy, and standing born of the *longue duree*.[47] Often, this requires a re-writing of the national narrative that contextualizes the nation-state's origins within a longer and revolutionary movement in terms of time, ideas, and race. This often requires the invention of traditions, myths, and national heroes. Singapore's restless search for an inspiring national past has led to the curious and tenuous intertwining of Chinese nationalism and civilizational discourse in Singapore's historiography. This desire for associational lineage with the *noblese oblige* of Chinese revolutionary nationalism is an attempt to re-engage the Chinese core of Singapore society in the light of the rise of China. It is also an attempt at political mobilization of the dominant ethnic Chinese behind state-led imperatives that seek a stronger assertion of Singapore's Chinese core.

In this "revisionist" historiography, Singapore's nationalism is identified as having its inspirations from Dr Sun Yat-sen's 1911 Chinese revolution. The Chinese migrants in Singapore in the early 1900s are portrayed as having shaped and contributed to the genesis of diasporic nationalism (critical to the Chinese republican revolution in 1912) and the development of Singapore nationalism. The exuberant interest in Sun celebrates the cultural idea of being Chinese and Sun's catalytic transformation of the Chinese mind everywhere. Sun's tangible importance is embodied vividly in the prominence accorded to the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, a gazetted national monument since 1994.[48] Lee Kuan Yew opened the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall on 12 November 2001 to mark Sun's birthday and the ninetieth anniversary of the Chinese revolution.[49] The villa is included as a national institution within the compulsory National Education (NE) programme.[50] Trade and Industry Minister B.G. George Yeo recently expressed that:

> The 1911 revolution contributed to Singapore's anti-colonial movement and, later, independence. And the Chinese nationalism awakened by Dr Sun provided a lot of energy for Singapore's nationalism. The [Sun Yat-sen] villa

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> is a testament to the historical contributions our forefathers made to that important revolution, not only with money but also with their blood and their lives. Singapore Chinese should take great pride in this.[51]

On another occasion, Yeo said that:

> For a long time, we refused to gazette it [Sun Yat-sen villa] as a national monument because we thought it had nothing to do with independent Singapore. Now we approach it differently. Singaporeans played a significant role in the Chinese Revolution of 1911 which was not only a political revolution but also a cultural revolution which changed the way Chinese all over the world saw themselves.[52]

However, this re-written narrative of the origins of Singapore's nationalism is a historical rupture and a quantum leap of historical logic, whose resonance is uncertain and likely to be contested. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Chinese immigrants in Singapore were sojourners and certainly did not regard themselves as "Singaporeans".[53] Further, neither the Singapore nation-state, nor any notion of it, was existent then. Sun's elevated status stands in stark contrast to two prominent World War II figures — Major-General Lim Bo Seng and Lieutenant Adnan Saidi. Both fought against Singapore's aggressors during the war and can claim closer affinity to Singapore nationalism than Sun's inchoate diasporic nationalism. Yet they are deemed unsuitable for elevation as national heroes as they were "defending Singapore for the British, not independent Singapore".[54]

Sun's tenuous links with Singapore and his curious insertion into Singapore's national heritage makes it doubtful that the selective adoption of aspects of Chinese national history, as part of Singapore's national past, could be truly accepted and internalized by its multiracial polity. The elevation of Sun, his ideas, and supposed heritage for Singapore's nation-building process is "non-consensual memory" that is hard-pressed for recognition even within the ethnic Chinese community, much less the other races. Sun's supposed contributory role to Singapore's nation-building, it is submitted, is doubtful and there are inherent dangers in selectively galvanizing a section, large no doubt, of the population. Singapore's independence and nation-building efforts had and continues to have broad-based multiracial support. To elevate the role of a sojourner, whose appeal to the Chinese then living here was as Chinese nationalists

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and not as Singaporeans, is to deviate from a national discourse that patently needs to be more multiracial and cross-cutting in its appeal, resonance, and legitimacy. Instead, it may unwittingly overemphasize the role of the ethnic Chinese community over the other races in Singapore's ongoing path to nationhood.[55] The potential to marginalize the non-Chinese racial groups is significant if indigenous Singaporean nationalism is ignored or is not given due credit.

Social representations of Singapore's multiracial history play a key role in nation-building. They can impact upon the relationship between national and ethnic identity. Excessive exuberance over the contributions of one ethnic group can undermine efforts at building a cohesive and integrated society. In one local study, there was little difference among the students of various races with regard to their selection of the ten most important events in Singapore history. The Sun Yat-sen connection was noticeably non-existent. What is significant is the survey's finding that "[t]here was no sense of ethnic in-group ontogeny, or focus on creating a narrative about historical origins at the ethnic level among any of the groups".[56] The need for a national history that is intuitively shared by all races cannot be underestimated. Multiracialism here must be truly representative, without the hegemonic discourse of the majority.

The Chinese Vote-Bank and Its Electoral Expression

Singapore's Asianization policy belies the criticality of cultivating the Chinese-educated/Chinese-speaking constituency as a valuable vote-bank. It is also construed as the traditional bastion of political and moral conservatism. Lending impetus is the political élites' revisionist view that Chineseness — with its supposed pragmatic and consensus-seeking culture — is necessary for the maintenance of continued political stability in Singapore's "limited democracy". The PAP government has always felt the acute need to be sensitive to the Chinese-educated given their numbers, especially when they continue to see themselves as being marginalized.[57] Although this group is declining in numbers, the need to woo the Chinese-educated and lower-income ethnic Chinese electorate remains part of the electoral landscape. There is the constant fear of being outflanked or for others to be seen to be "more Chinese" than the PAP.

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By the 1990s, the younger generation of Chinese-speakers replaced the older Chinese-educated as the core constituency (since Chinese language as a primary medium of instruction in schools had been phased out by the mid-1980s). The 1997 general elections underlined the undercurrents of the uneasy relationship between the Chinese-educated/Chinese-speaking and English-educated/English-speaking Chinese.[58] In 1992, the government-affiliated ethnic Chinese self-help group, the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC) was established in response to the "silent majority" Chinese electoral backlash in the 1991 general elections, particularly among the less well-off, against the government's policies which were deemed to be disadvantageous to the dominant ethnic group.[59]

Beyond refining policies that emphasize Chinese language and culture, the PAP consciously fields a sufficient number of candidates who are deemed acceptable to the Chinese-educated or who have the necessary Chinese dialect proficiency. Chinese dialects, unsurprisingly, demonstrate a resilience and popular resonance among older Chinese-Singaporeans such that even government ministers would campaign using Chinese dialects, especially in the heartlands, during the general elections. In recent years, the government formed the Chinese community liaison group, which comprises PAP MPs who have an association with the Chinese ground, to help it be "attuned to sentiments in the politically important Chinese-speaking community … [and] to make sure this community does not feel marginalized in increasingly English-speaking Singapore".[60]

Today, the Chinese-educated/Chinese-speaking and English-educated/English-speaking Chinese dichotomy has been reshaped as one of the heartlander versus the cosmopolitan. While the labels have changed, the inherent differences of differential adaptability and receptivity to globalization and the English language persist. However, the new distinction emphasizes the differences in terms of value systems, intrinsic loyalties, and reifies the ideational-economic divide within the Chinese-Singaporean community. This highlights the salient undercurrents despite almost four decades of nation-building and social engineering.[61]

In seeking to capture the ethnic Chinese vote, the challenge is to

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maintain an even keel since electoral expediency can undermine the multiracial policy by unwittingly encouraging ethnic outflanking. In the midst of creeping Chineseness, intra-Chinese outflanking can have negative knock-on effects on the canvassing by the other racial groups for their own cultural and political space.

The Economic Reality for the Reassertion of Chineseness — the China Dimension

The reassertion of Chineseness is, in part, motivated by the multi-faceted interactions with China. The economic sphere has been aggressively cultivated as a platform for the reassertion of Chineseness in Singapore and an avenue for catalysing nationalism in the new international political economy.[62] It has been argued that Singapore's strength lies in its straddling East and West as well as its cultural affinity with China. In contemporary Singaporean political discourse, China is simultaneously portrayed as an opportunity of challenges as well as a natural worry to Singapore's and Southeast Asia's well-being. Singapore is alive to the need to manage the "Chinese juggernaut", which has shifted the economic gravity away from Southeast Asia, resulting in significantly lower foreign direct investments in the region since 1997.[63]

Singapore's economic approach *vis-à-vis* China is to "jump into the Chinese bandwagon" by co-opting the opportunities and ameliorating the threats.[64] This necessitates that Singapore remains relevant to China's economic agenda by rigorously tapping on cultural affinity and ties, as well as good political relations. Thus, Singapore actively configures itself as a "brand state", utilizing its economic and cultural positioning, for transnational influence and knowledge arbitrage involving China and the Chinese overseas communities.[65] This leverage on the strategic equity of a brand niche is an instance of Singapore's attempt to ride with, rather than going against, the Chinese juggernaut. In an age of mobile capital and the expected ascendancy of China, Singapore has sought to transform its role from mere traders and middlemen to that of the international arbitrageur and advantaged investor with an inside track to business opportunities in China. Singapore has spared no effort in strategically positioning itself as a knowledge arbitrage hub in China's economic matters — a gateway for foreign investors intending to break into the

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China market. This command of cross-cultural accommodation is capitalized to emphasize its utility as a valuable joint venture partner for foreign multinationals seeking to do business in China.[66] The evolution of Singapore's re-branding itself *vis-à-vis* China is now embodied in its official declaration that China is part of its economic hinterland.[67]

Sino-Singapore economic relations are expanding rapidly. China is Singapore's top foreign investment destination since 1997. Between 1990 and 2000, bilateral trade between Singapore and China increased robustly at 15 per cent per annum, tripling from S$5.2 billion in 1990 to S$28.1 billion in 2002. Although Singapore's trade with most other major trading partners registered negative growth in 2002, Sino-Singapore trade figures in 2002 represented an impressive 25.3 per cent increase over 2001.[68] By June 2002, the total cumulative contractual foreign direct investment (FDI) from Singapore into China was US$38.7 billion while the cumulative actual FDI was US$20.2 billion in 9,875 investment projects.[69] Forty per cent of Singapore's bilateral trade is accounted for by Guangdong province alone.[70] Singapore is eyeing China's World Trade Organization membership and its hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games as opportunities for bilateral economic ties to develop further. Likewise, Singapore seeks to be China's gateway to Southeast Asia for increasing Chinese economic activity in the region. Already, Singapore is China's second favourite destination for its investments in Southeast Asia.[71] The abiding belief that co-ethnics have advantages in cross-border transactions has also seen Singapore seeking to partake in the booming Sino-Indian trade.[72] However, the younger Chinese-Singaporeans appear to be condescending towards the potential "hollowing out" of Singapore's economy by a resurgent China.[73]

A variety of initiatives have been launched to further develop Singapore's niche in the Chinese economy. These include having government scholars spend a year in China and working with their counterparts and acquire intimate knowledge of China;[74] the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) Asia Business Fellowship Programme, which aims to develop a core of future business leaders who have deep knowledge and strong links to the region, especially China and India;[75] the creation of an international business division within the MTI with a focus on China; and the resource and network information platforms such as

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Network China, which "aims to be a premier networking platform for Singapore-based companies setting up business, looking for business partners and investing in China".[76] The government-led outreach is significant — Singapore's International Enterprise (trade development) offices are found in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shandong, and Dalian.[77] The Singapore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China was recently established in Beijing.

These multi-faceted efforts, emphasizing both the hardware of business information and intelligence and the software of cultural affinity, seek to emplace Singapore as a key player in the China market. These promotional efforts extend to reaching out to the Chinese "diaspora". In 1991, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry initiated the inaugural World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC) in Singapore.[78] The Singapore-based convention secretariat also manages the on-line World Chinese Business Network (WCBN).[79] The government has also encouraged the clan associations to reconceptualize their role in the cultural and economic life of the twenty-first century in order to attract younger members and to reap potential economic benefits from kinship ties.[80]

Beyond the economic sphere, Singapore has initiated several complementary endeavours on research and public education on the Chinese overseas to promote the Chinese-Singaporean cultural broadband facility and to carve "a role in the development of Chinese culture and its evolving civilization".[81] These include the (1) establishment of the Chinese Heritage Centre at the Nanyang Technological University in 1995, under the auspices of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, which "can help Singapore develop into an important centre of Sinic studies in the Pacific Rim"; and (2) the establishment of the National Chinese Internet Programme to develop Singapore into a cyber-hub for the Chinese language Internet. The National Library Board is working jointly with local and foreign organizations and experts on Huayinet, a virtual resource centre on overseas ethnic Chinese communities.[82]

Over the past decade, increasing economic, political, and military contacts have given texture and breadth to the belief of complemented cultural affinity. Sino-Singapore ties have grown from strength to strength

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and high-level exchanges are regular and frequent.[83] The closeness of bilateral ties is reflected in the increasing government-to-government and people-to-people contacts, which are seemingly more significant than Singapore's exchanges with its immediate neighbours.[84] As an indicator of deepening bilateral relations, Singapore and China have established a high-level joint council to examine concrete areas for increased co-operation.[85] In the early to mid-1990s, Singapore's development experience and model of soft authoritarianism were contemplated as a point of reference and possible blueprint for China.[86] China has studied Singapore's political and social control of info-communications technology.[87] After Deng Xiaoping's *nanxun* (southern) tour in 1992, a constant stream of delegations from various parts of China have visited to study Singapore's experience of promoting rapid economic development while maintaining social discipline. The Chinese Mayors' Study Visit programme, inaugurated in 1997, has been extended to 2007.[88]

In the military sphere, Singapore's defence ties with China are "progressing on a step-by-step basis" and defence attachés have been exchanged.[89] China has reportedly offered Singapore military training facilities on Hainan island.[90] Given the multi-faceted dimension of China-Singapore relations and the subtext of Sinophobia in Southeast Asia, this cosy state of affairs can be potentially troubling if China seeks to assert dominance in the region.[91]

The dense and increasing network of relations in many areas between China and Singapore since 1990 is evident. China's imminent rise as a political and economic power has certainly played a significant role in the Singapore leaders' assessment and decision to engage China. In engaging China as a key plank of its economic and foreign policy, it has certainly sought to capitalize on the fact that Singapore is an ethnically Chinese dominant state. While hard economics is a political reality in today's world economy, there is no need to emphasize race in the economic drive. This orientation is undeniably an outcome of *realpolitik*. In Singapore's quest for relevancy in the geopolitics and economics of East Asia, however, the ethnic connection must be carefully managed if it is not to create uncertainty among the non-Chinese minorities.

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The Complacency of Quasi-Hegemony?

Ethnic harmony since independence has perhaps weakened the sensitivity of the different ethnic groups towards the need for more integration while understanding and appreciating the diversity. The Chinese, as the dominant majority in Singapore, appears to have neglected the importance of reaching out to the minorities. Given the dominance of the ethnic Chinese numerically and in social, political, and economic life, it is probable that the ethnic sensitivity may have been dulled such that the majority may have "forgotten" that a quarter of the population is non-Chinese. Various national surveys have revealed that the ethnic Chinese, despite being the majority, are not the most enthusiastic about race relations. While this observation should not be all that startling, it would appear that the Asianization of Singapore might have the unintended effect of exacerbating ethnic consciousness such that primary school students are mixing on the basis of race and language.[92]

In a recent Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) study, 69 per cent of Chinese wish to change ethnic classification to a Chinese dialect (rather than Chinese) and 54 per cent Chinese consider a Chinese dialect as their mother tongue although the factor score of the survey showed that the Chinese placed less importance on ethnic identity than the Malays and Indians. Seventy-three per cent of Chinese say "multiracialism makes me more Singaporean" (cf. 87 per cent Malays and 78 per cent Indians). Fewer Chinese invited non-Chinese to celebrate special occasions like wedding. Twenty-nine per cent Chinese feel uneasy in a place full of people who are not of the same race (cf. 22 per cent and 24 per cent for Malays and Indians, respectively). Likewise, 78 per cent Chinese support different racial groups living in Singapore (cf. 88 per cent and 82 per cent for Malays and Indians, respectively).[93]

In a Ministry of Community Development and Sports study in 2001 on the social attitudes of Singaporeans, 89 per cent of Chinese (compared with 94 per cent Malays and 90 per cent Indians) were satisfied with current race relations. However, fewer Malays (85 per cent) were optimistic about improvement of race relations in the next ten years compared with the Indians and Chinese (both 94 per cent). The Chinese were also less likely to be satisfied with current religious group relations

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although the Malays were less likely to be optimistic about the future of religious group relations than the Chinese and Indians.[94]

In the wake of the two rounds of arrests of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members under the Internal Security Act for terrorist activities linked with the Al-Qaeda network, the cultural gulf between the Chinese and the Malays is evident and surprising — the Chinese being unduly suspicious of the Malays. It reflects a worrying sense of complacency towards inter-ethnic relations. What is interesting is the apparent need for the Malays to reach out to the Chinese and assure the majority group; the compelling need for the Chinese to do the same is apparently lacking. Mr Wee Cho Yaw (President of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations) has described the state of affairs as one of the races having "a lack of meaningful interaction".[95] Malay-Muslim members of Parliament have visited the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and senior editors of the Chinese newspapers as part of the Malay-Muslim outreach and confidence-building measure.[96] Yet, there is also the concern within the Chinese community that the vigorous emphasis on enlarging the common space appeared "as if the old government suspicion towards what were called Chinese chauvinists is rearing its head again", in addition to the government spending "too much time addressing the post–September 11 issue".[97] Although opinion polls show that moderate views prevail in the Malay-Muslim and non-Muslim communities, it is disturbing that the two rounds of arrests of JI members have aroused concern among the latter of the loyalties of the former.[98] Discriminatory practices at the workplace have apparently been observed.[99]

If Malay-Muslim Singaporeans' loyalty is continually called into question on account of their race and religion, it is only natural to expect defensiveness to set in. This will only distract from the important issues of integration and prevent the moderates from claiming the stage from the supposed extremists who want to turn Singapore into an Islamic state through force and ethno-violence.[100]

It is beyond doubt that the government's current agenda is to enlarge the common space in Singapore.[101] But this common space cannot be Chinese-centred; it has to be patently Singaporean-centred. Multi-

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racialism, in which we are asked to grant equal esteem and recognition to every culture, while recognizing the unique qualities of each, must remain the core of the Singaporean-Singapore culture and identity. Integration is very much a two-way process and for nation-building to be sustainable, this mind-set is fundamental.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

> Singapore's remarkable success has truly turned immigrants into settlers, and has ensured that those of Chinese descent among its citizens have a home to live and die for. [102]

The unifying theme of Singaporean-Chineseness, in essence, centres on the powerful instrumentality that coheres from the calibrated use of Chinese race, language, and culture in political governance, economic development, and cultural imperatives. The deliberate function of "situational ethnicity" in Singapore necessarily results in the meanings of Chineseness being constantly renegotiated and rearticulated by the state and its élites, in synchrony with the ebbs and flows of their significance to state-led discourse in the various spheres of politics, economics, and culture. This chapter proposes that Chineseness has come full circle as it is very much a nuanced thematic feature in Singapore life today. It suggests that Singapore must be careful in its ethnic orientation lest it unwittingly strays from the firm commitment to multiracialism towards racial hegemony.

Perhaps the way forward is to de-emphasize race and other ethnic indicators in Singapore.[103] This is not to suggest removing them altogether, since this is neither feasible nor practical. Indeed, this chapter has pointed out how the calibrated use of Chineseness has brought benefits in the political élites' ability to mobilize the dominant majority towards national objectives. In a multiracial society, the Chinese cannot expect to be as Chinese as the Chinese in China. Likewise, the Malays and Indians cannot realistically expect to be as Malay and Indian as their counterparts in Malaysia/Indonesia and India respectively are when asserting their ethnic identities. The need for give-and-take in such an environment is vital. Extreme care must also be given to intra-ethnic rivalries as intra-ethnic outflanking can have negative knock-on effects on the canvassing by the other racial groups for their own cultural and

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political space. As such, there must be caution exercised towards intra-ethnic rivalry among the ethnic Chinese (for example, between the Chinese-speakers and English-speakers) and the growing assertiveness among the Chinese for their proverbial space under the sun. Brown's views are insightful in this regard:

> In the context of Singapore, where ethnic balance must inevitably refer to the demographic predominance of the Chinese, the translation of ethnic neutrality into the language of ethnic equality could eventually generate a politically dangerous tension in which the Chinese populace interprets ethnically-neutral Asian communitarianism as granting legitimate dominance to their culture and interests; while the non-Chinese interpret ethnic neutrality as granting them some parity with the Chinese. It was precisely to avoid such ethnic tensions that the Singaporean state elite initially took the path of ethnically-neutral management. To promote ethnic consciousness as a resource for nation-building and political development, while at the same time guarding against the emergence of competitive ethnocentrism in society, is indeed to undertake a problematical balancing act.[104]

As a work-in-progress society, Singapore has to move beyond mere tolerance and seek greater understanding of the different races, religions, and cultures, with an appreciation of our diversity. And the dominant majority ethnic Chinese should take the lead as a confidence-building gesture of their commitment to genuine multiracialism. Only from this can social capital and inter-racial trust grow from strength to strength.[105]

Nation-building entails the development and maturity of a Singaporean-Singapore identity which can help reduce the countervailing pulls of race, culture, and religion, which are stronger for the minority races than for the Chinese. Over time, these identifiers will reduce in importance. While the boundaries between the ethnic groups may never disappear, the bonds established form the commonality needed for sustainable multiracialism. In this regard, the ethnic Chinese must also be conscious of their role as the majority ethnic group and their commitment to sustainable and true multiracialism is as critical as it was in the fledgeling days of Singapore's nationhood.

NOTES

This chapter is a work-in-progress; it draws heavily and builds upon various related themes and ideas discussed in my earlier essays: "Reconceptualizing Chinese Identity:

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The Politics of Chineseness in Singapore", in *Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia: A Dialogue between Tradition and Modernity,* edited by Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), pp. 109–36; "Re-Engaging Chineseness: Political, Economic and Cultural Imperatives of Nation-Building in Singapore", *China Quarterly* 175 (September 2003): 751–74; and "'We, the Citizens of Singapore…': Multiethnicity, Its Evolution and Its Aberrations", in *Beyond Rituals and Riots: Ethnic Pluralism and Social Cohesion in Singapore,* edited by Lai Ah Eng (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004), pp. 65–97.

1. See, generally, Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, 2 vols. (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1988); Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 2003), at p. 64 notes that "Zheng He [Cheng Ho] and his lieutenants lived on as mythologized cult figures in legends told in Java, Bali, Kalimantan, and Sumatra". On the seven epic voyages through the China Seas and the Indian Ocean between 1405 and 1433, see Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne 1405–33* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). See also Gavin Menzies' controversial claims on Admiral Cheng Ho challenging conventional wisdom in his *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (London: Bantam Press, 2002).
2. Recent archeological excavations in Singapore's old civic district have suggested that there was already an ancient city teeming with trade as early as the fourteenth century: see "Excavation at Padang Opens Doors to Ancient City", *Straits Times*, 23 April 2003, p. H9; "14th-Century Chinese Outpost Here", *Straits Times*, 15 May 2003, p. 3. See also letter by Director, Singapore History Museum, "Museum Sees Singapore History Predating Raffles' Arrival", *Straits Times*, 23 May 2003, p. 26.
3. See, generally, C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819–1988*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989).
4. The classic study on Chinese in Southeast Asia remains Victor Purcell's *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965, 1980). More recent accounts can be found in Lynn Pan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Archipelago Press and Landmark Books, 1998); Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997). For a recent study on the laws in various Southeast Asian countries and China relating to the ethnic Chinese, see M. Barry Hooker, ed., *Law and the Chinese in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).
5. See, for instance, Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), especially chapter 1 entitled "Rubies and Rice Paddies: Chinese Minority Dominance in Southeast Asia".

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6. The fear that the local ethnic Chinese community could be a fifth column in Southeast Asian states is well captured in C.P. Fitzgerald's *The Third China: The Chinese Communities in South-East Asia* (Vancouver: Publications Centre, University of British Columbia, 1965); and David S.G. Goodman, "Are Asia's 'Ethnic Chinese' a Regional-Security Threat?" *Survival* 39, no. 4 (1997–98): 140–55.
7. The concept of Chineseness is not without scholarly controversy. Examples of recent discussion can be found in Wang Gungwu, "Chineseness: The Dilemmas of Place and Practice", in *Cosmopolitan Capitalists: Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora at the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Gary G. Hamilton (Seattle, W.A.: University of Washington Press, 1999), pp. 118–34; Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001).
8. Diane K. Mauzy and R.S. Milne, *Singapore Politics under the People's Action Party* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 99–100.
9. According to the Singapore Census of Population 2000, the population composition by ethnic group is as follows: Chinese, 2,505,379; Malays, 453,633; Indians, 257,791; Others, 46,406; giving a total of 3,263,209.
10. Also implicit in this belief is the existence of a hierarchy of cultures.
11. The figures are from the Census 2000 *Singapore Population* handbook (Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics, May 2001), p. 8 and p. 17. As the *Straits Times* noted in an editorial citing a demographer's study, "that the Chinese Singaporean fertility rate of 1.3, if constant, meant an annual decline of 1.5 per cent, which would result in the Chinese segment of the population dwindling to one quarter of its current size in 100 years": see "Helping the Stork", *Straits Times*, 12 February 2003, p. 12.
12. Chinese-Singaporeans are less likely than their Malay and Indian counterparts to agree that married couples should have children: see David Chan, *Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans (SAS) 2001: Attitudes on Family* (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development and Sports, September 2002).
13. Leslie King, "Demographic Trends, Pronatalism, and Nationalist Ideologies in the Late Twentieth Century", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 3 (2002): 367–89 at 379.
14. The Asian expatriate community comprises predominantly Chinese and Indian nationals. According to "Asian Expats: In Singapore for Now and Forever?" *Straits Times*, 2 August 2003, p. H12: "Some 41 per cent of Singapore's gross domestic product growth in the 1990s came from foreigners here on employment passes, according to the Ministry of Trade and Industry in 2001. Without overseas talent, Singapore could not have seen an average quarterly growth of 7.8 per cent in the 1990s … Foreign nationals are helping to boost the flagging Singapore birth rate. The stork brought 804 babies to mothers who are Chinese nationals here and

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560 babies to female Indian nationals from January to June this year [2003]".

15. In March 2001, the Hua Yuan Association was formed to help new arrivals from China to settle in: see "Chinese Immigrants Form New Association", *Straits Times*, 2 May 2001, p. H1; "A Home Away from Home for Chinese Nationals", *Straits Times*, 13 January 2002, p. 27. The association's website is at <www.myhuayuan.org>. The Singapore government does not release figures on the number of Chinese nationals in Singapore. Their numbers are evident in Singapore's educational institutions.
16. The Home Ownership Plus Education (HOPE) programme, unveiled in August 2003 and replaces its predecessor, the Small Families Improvement Scheme, requires each married couple to have no more than two children in return for up to S$100,000 worth of benefits including education bursaries, housing and training grants. See "Unveiled: Help for Poor Young Families", *Straits Times*, 21 August 2003, p. 1.
17. Michael Leifer, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of South-East Asia*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 208.
18. Chan Heng Chee and Obaid ul Haq, eds., *The Prophetic & the Political: Selected Speeches & Writings of S. Rajaratnam* (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1987), p. 149. On the long-standing phenomenon of diasporas and their impact on ethnic politics, see Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
19. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings and Times Editions, 1998), p. 280.
20. Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story; 1965–2000, Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings and Times Editions, 2000), pp. 546–47.
21. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, pp. 185–86. See also Wong Ting-Hong, *Hegemonies Compared: State Formation and Chinese School Politics in Postwar Singapore and Hong Kong* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002). See also Tim Harper, "Lim Chin Siong and the 'Singapore Story'", in *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History*, edited by Tan Jing Quee and Jomo K.S. (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001), p. 15: "However, recent writing has challenged the stereotypical notion — perpetuated in many accounts since — that the politics of the 'Chinese-educated' was driven by an innate ethnocentrism and a natural susceptibility to a 'secret society complex' and to Communism. Student politics was fuelled by a wider sense of exclusion for the Chinese-educated with a colonial society in which fluency in English was the route to employment and advancement. It was underpinned by resentment of the privileges of the Anglophone Chinese. Yet within the Chinese community, graduates of Chinese middle schools were themselves something of an elite".
22. Carl A. Trocki, "Development of Labour Organisation in Singapore, 1800–1960",

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Australian Journal of Politics and History 47, no. 1 (2001): 115–29.

23. The important role played by the Chinese vanguards in the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) is discussed in Sai Siew Min and Huang Jianli, "The 'Chinese-Educated' Political Vanguards: Ong Pang Boon, Lee Khoon Choy, and Jek Yeun Thong", in *Lee's Lieutenants: Singapore's Old Guard,* edited by Lam Peng Er and Kevin Y.L. Tan (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 132–68.

24. Ian Chalmers, "Loosening State Control in Singapore: The Emergence of Local Capital as a Political Force", *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 20, no. 2 (1992): 57–84.

25. Chan Kwok Bun and Ng Beoy Kui, "Singapore", in *Chinese Business in Southeast Asia: Contesting Cultural Explanations, Researching Entrepreneurship,* edited by Edmund Terence Gomez and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (Surrey: Curzon, 2001), p. 41; Yong Ching Fatt, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), pp. 273–84.

26. See W.G. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 320, 355–57. On the early Chinese entrepreneurs' contribution to the Singapore economy, see ibid., pp. 208–35. The broadening collaboration between the government and the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) is enunciated in the Minister of Trade and Industry's speech at the SCCCI's 95th Anniversary Celebrations & the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall Fund-Raising Dinner, 24 October 2001.

27. Speech (delivered in Mandarin) by George Yeo, Minister for Information and the Arts and Second Minister for Trade and Industry at the 1998 Speak Mandarin Campaign Launch, 12 September 1998.

28. "So, Who's Afraid of SAP Schools?" *Straits Times*, 16 February 2002. The scheme has now enlarged to cover an additional fifteen primary schools. The Language Elective Programme (LEP) in Chinese is offered to encourage academically able and linguistically talented students to study Chinese at GCE 'A' Level in three selected junior colleges. Students in the LEP (Chinese) programme will take the GCE 'A' Level Higher Chinese papers, and will be given the option to offer the Higher Chinese Special Paper.

29. Education Study Team, *Report on the Ministry of Education 1978* (Singapore: Singapore National Printers, 1979); and Moral Education Committee, *Report on Moral Education 1979* (Singapore: Singapore National Printers, 1979).

30. Ostensibly one would not regard Confucianism as a religion. See Eddie C.Y. Kuo, "Confucianism as Political Discourse in Singapore: The Case of an Incomplete Revitalization Movement", in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons*, edited by Tu Wei-ming (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 294–309.

31. The essence of Asian values postulated a particularistic style of political governance premised on state-defined community interests having precedence over the

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individual. The literature on "Asian values" and human rights debate is voluminous. A succinct discussion of the "Singapore School" can be found in Daniel A. Bell, *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Eva Brems, *Human Rights: Universality and Diversity* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2001), pp. 36–49. In January 1999 at the Davos World Economic Forum, Lee Kuan Yew stated that he had in his speeches all along referred to "Confucianist values" rather than "Asian values". Lee added: "When the West, especially Western journalists, use the term 'Asian values', they mean it as an antithesis to Western values. But there are actually many kinds of Asian values". See "'Asian Values'? I Didn't Use This Term, says SM", *Straits Times*, 30 January 1999, p. 6; "Looking to the Future", *Asiaweek*, 21 May 1999, p. 34. The chorus of the virtues of Asian values has been noticeably muted since the East Asian economic and political systems went into a tailspin in 1997: see Francis Fukuyama, "Asian Values in the Wake of the Asian Crisis", in *Democracy, Market Economics, and Development: An Asian Perspective,* edited by Farrukh Iqbal and Jong-Il You (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001). For a sympathetic treatment of "Asian values" in the afermath of the Asian economic crisis, see Nathan Glazer, "Two Cheers for 'Asian Values'", *National Interest* 57 (Fall 1999): 27–34; Anthony Milner, "What Happened to 'Asian Values'?" in *Towards Recovery in Pacific Asia*, edited by Gerald Segal and David S.G. Goodman (London: Routledge, 2000).

32. Confucianism and Chinese ethnicity, combined with increased regional economic integration, have produced some diasporic re-sinification: Michael Pinches, "Cultural Relations, Class and the New Rich of Asia", in *Culture and Privilege in Capitalist Asia,* edited by Michael Pinches (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1–55.

33. Henkin argues that Confucianism and human rights are compatible and that "Confucianism values" are universal values; see Louis Henkin, "Confucianism, Human Rights and 'Cultural Relativism'", in *Confucianism and Human Rights,* edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). The earlier portrayal of Chinese culture was akin to it being a collectivist shackle: see Robert W. Hefner, "Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia", in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* edited by Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 37–41.

34. Falk notes that in East Asian societies "there is far less opportunity for the emergence of a strong sense of being a citizen, especially given the cultural effort to repudiate the individualism of the West": see Richard Falk, *Predatory Globalization: A Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 160–61. For Falk, the rule of law and secular constitutionalism would be better bases than state-manufactured cultural foundations to instil respect for difference and inter-ethnic tolerance.

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35. Quotes in this section are from Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's Ministerial Statement on Chinese Language in Schools in Parliament, 20 January 1999.
36. Prime Minister Goh's National Day Rally speech in Mandarin, 24 August 1997.
37. See Prime Minister Goh's speech at the *Lianhe Zaobao* 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner, 6 September 1998: "Fewer Here Reading and Writing Chinese", *Straits Times*, 7 March 2001, p. H5. However, the future of the main Chinese language newspaper, *Zaobao*, is secure as the government has indicated that it is a "national project" to maintain *Zaobao* as a high-quality Chinese language newspaper: see Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's speech at the *Lianhe Zaobao* 80th Anniversary Gala Dinner on 6 September 2003.
38. Prime Minister Goh's 1997 National Day Rally speech in Mandarin, 27 August 1997. On the evolution of the Speak Mandarin campaign, see Promote Mandarin Council, *Mandarin: The Chinese Connection* (Singapore: Ministry of Information and the Arts, 2000). The campaign's website is at <http://mandarin.org.sg/>.
39. Speech by Environment Minister Lim Swee Say at the 2002 festival opening, 1 March 2002.
40. Another review of the teaching of Chinese in schools is in the pipeline to help ensure Singapore's linguistic edge in doing business in China: see Prime Minister Goh's 2002 National Day Rally speech. See also "Learn Chinese for Cultural Value, Say Some", *Straits Times*, 31 August 2001, p. 46. The Chinese community leaders are also planning to start a school that will place emphasis on the learning of Chinese: see "Plans for New School with Emphasis on Chinese", *Straits Times*, 12 October 2002, p. 8.
41. See also "Will Chinese Become a Dumpling House Language?" *Straits Times*, 31 March 2001, p. H16; "Arresting the Chinese Language Decline", *Straits Times*, 5 May 2002, p. 22.
42. Goh Yeng Seng, "A Sociolinguistic Profile of Chinese Language Teachers in Singapore", in *Challenges Facing the Singapore Education System Today*, edited by Jason Tan, S. Gopinathan, and Ho Wan Kam (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 227–45. The import of Chinese language teachers from Malaysia and China has been tried as a stopgap measure.
43. Then Senior Minister of State for Education, Tharman Shamugaratnam, in endorsing the bilingual approach urged teachers to bear in mind that "whatever we do in education, we should remain pragmatic, not doctrinaire, in our approach": see "Effective Teaching and Learning of the Mother Tongue: Innovating and Adapting to New Circumstances", speech delivered at the seminar on The Significance of Speaking Skills for Language Development, 15 February 2003.
44. For a sense of the emotions in some of these issues, see the collection of essays written in the 1980s and 1990s on the status of Chinese language and culture in

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Droplets, edited by James St. Andre (Singapore: Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, 2001).

45. Speech by B.G. George Yeo, Minister for Information and the Arts and Second Minister for Trade and Industry, at the Launching Ceremony of *Zaobao*'s Revamp, 18 May 1998.

46. Transcript of *Lianhe Zaobao*'s interview with Minister George Yeo, 9 June 1999.

47. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1991).

48. Sun had used the villa as his temporary headquarters in Southeast Asia between 1900 and 1911. See "Sun Yat Sen Villa to Recount His Life", *Straits Times*, 29 August 2001, p. H8; "Sun-Kissed Shrine", *Straits Times*, 12 November 2001, p. L4. See also Huang Jianli, "Dissonant Narratives of the Past: Positioning the Sun Yat Sen Villa in Singapore", unpublished conference paper, June 2001, on the villa's shifting status in Singapore's history. More information on the villa can be found at its website <http://wanqingyuan.com.sg>.

49. The first words that greet visitors at the villa are: "One man changed China, Dr Sun Yat Sen"; the Chinese translation reads as "孙中山，一个改变中国命运的人". These words were penned by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

50. "Students Throng Sun Yat Sen Memorial", *Straits Times*, 15 May 2002, p. H10. The NE programme aims to "develop national cohesion, the instinct for survival and confidence in the future"; see the NE website at <http://www1.moe.edu.sg/ne/>.

51. Quoted in "Historical Villa's Very Slow Face-Lift", *Sunday Times*, 26 March 2000, p. 36 and "Sun Shone at This Old Villa", *Sunday Times*, 2 April 2000, pp. 52–53.

52. From the SGH (Singapore General Hospital) lecture entitled "Between North and South, Between East and West", 29 April 2001. See also "New Phase for Chinese in Singapore", *Straits Times*, 1 December 2001, p. H2, where the minister hoped that "young Singaporeans would widen their knowledge of their ancestors and understand the larger canvas of Chinese history and Singapore's connection to that canvas. They should understand how Singapore's development was deeply affected by the end of the Qing dynasty and how the Chinese here maintained their links with China."

53. Adam McKeown notes the nature of Chinese identity at the turn of the twentieth century: "To be Chinese, anywhere in the world, was to be a representative of the motherland, to have a stake in the future of China, and to recognize the claims of China and Chinese culture over one's loyalty": see his *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago and Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago, I.L.: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 94. See also Prasenjit Duara, "Nationalists among Transnationals: Overseas Chinese and the Idea of China, 1900–1911", in

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Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism, edited by Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 39–60.

54. Prime Minister's Forum, Nanyang Technological University, 11 May 1999. On the reinsertion of World War II memory into Singapore's national narrative of survival and national identity, see Diana Wong, "Memory Suppression and Memory Production: The Japanese Occupation of Singapore", in *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, edited by T. Fujitami et al. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 218–38. There is also a growing Chinese language literature on Force 136, Lim's covert unit.

55. As Gillis reminds us: "Identities and memories are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*": John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 5 (emphasis in original).

56. James H. Liu, Belinda Lawrence, Collen Ward, and Sheela Abraham, "Social Representations of History in Malaysia and Singapore: On the Relationship between National and Ethnic Identity", *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 5 (2002): 3–20.

57. Raj K. Vasil, *Governing Singapore: Democracy and National Development* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 185–89; Kwok Kian Woon, "Singapore", in *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*, edited by Lynn Pan (Singapore: Archipelago Press and Landmark Books, 1998), p. 215.

58. Cherian George, *Singapore: The Air-Conditioned Nation, Essays of the Politics of Comfort and Control 1990–2000* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2000), pp. 108–13; Vasil, *Governing Singapore*, pp. 196–97; and Li Jinshan and Jorgen Elklit, "The Singapore General Election 1997: Campaigning Strategy, Results, and Analysis", *Electoral Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 1999): 199–216.

59. Vasil, *Governing Singapore*, pp. 179–90, 213–16; Ho Khai Leong, *The Politics of Policy-Making in Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 123–28.

60. "MPs begin new round of visits to Chinese groups", *Straits Times,* 16 February 2001, p. H8. A common theme is for the government to make a special effort to retain Chinese culture and traditions. See also "Connecting with the Changing Chinese Ground", *Straits Times,* 19 April 2003, p. H10, in which the article argues that the memories of the political costs of alienating the Chinese-speaking ground still haunt the People's Action Party and that the party must now court the loyalty of a Chinese business and cultural élite that does not need it in the same way as before.

61. A discussion of the heartlander-cosmopolitan divide can be found in my "Reconceptualizing Chinese Identity: The Politics of Chineseness in Singapore",

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in *Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia: A Dialogue between Tradition and Modernity*, edited by Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), pp. 109–36; and "Re-Engaging Chineseness: Political, Economic and Cultural Imperatives of Nation-Building in Singapore", *China Quarterly* 175 (September 2003): 758–59.

62. For the thesis that the motivation behind sustained economic growth in the modern economy is competitive nationalism, see Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Greenfeld argues that the collective consciousness in nationalism urges the citizenry on in the quest for national prestige and engenders the phenomenon of economic competitiveness. See also Rawi Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States in Comparative Perspective* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001) for the argument that economic nationalism and national identity impacts upon economic policy and explains the different economic policies of the new states formed by the breakup of the Soviet Union.

63. Kenichi Ohmae, "Profits and Perils in China, Inc.", *Strategy+Business* (online edition), no. 26 (2002). Moreover, closer cross-straits economic relations culminating in the China-Taiwan economies integrating fully could have adverse effects on Singapore's economy: see "Convergence of Cross-Straits Economic Interests and Implications for Singapore" (Singapore: Ministry of Trade and Industry, August 2001).

64. In a conscious attempt to prime Singapore society, China's economic rise and the potential negative effect on Singapore's economy is a constant refrain in the numerous ministerial speeches since early 2001.

65. Peter van Ham, "The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation", *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 5 (2001): 2–6. A "brand state" is one with "geographical and political settings that seem trivial compared with their emotional resonance among an increasingly global audience of consumers. The brand state's use of its history, geography, and ethnic motifs to construct its own distinct image is a benign campaign that lacks deep-rooted and often antagonistic sense of national identity and uniqueness that can accompany nationalism".

66. Knowledge arbitrage — the knowledge and ability to take advantage of market differences in labour costs and product markets — facilitates companies in sourcing for the best production sites based on the determinants of manufacturing cost, access to markets, and distribution channels: see John Kao, "The World Wide Web of Chinese Business", *Harvard Business Review* LXXI, no. 2 (1993): 24–36.

67. Michael Porter's influential cluster theory, as a driver of prosperity in the international political economy, highlights the need to integrate a city-region with other economic units: see, for example, his "Locations, Clusters, and Company Strategy", in *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography*, edited by Gordon L. Clark et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 253–74; and "Regions

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and the New Economics of Competition", in *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*, edited by Allen J. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 139–57.

68. The first six months of 2003 witnessed a rapid growth in Sino-Singapore trade. Total trade reached S$16.04 billion, an increase of 23.1 per cent over the same period in the previous year. China's share of Singapore's total trade was 7.13 per cent, overtaking Hong Kong as the fifth largest trade partner of Singapore, only behind Malaysia, United States, European Union, and Japan.

69. Unless otherwise indicated, the figures in this section are taken from the International Enterprise Singapore (formerly: Trade Development Board) website <http://www.iesingapore.com/> (accessed 13 September 2003).

70. Statistics compiled from "Singapore and China Economic Relations" (Singapore: Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2001), International Enterprise Singapore press statement, "Singapore to Vie for a Stake in the Beijing Olympics 2008", 9 January 2002. For an analysis of the Chinese provinces' foreign economic relations, especially with Chinese overseas communities, see Peter T.Y. Cheung and James T.H. Tang, "The External Relations of China's Provinces", in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978–2000*, edited by David M. Lampton (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 91–122. On China's strategies of courting Chinese overseas, see Mette Thun, "Reaching Out and Incorporating Chinese Overseas: The Trans-Territorial Scope of the PRC by the End of the 20th Century", *China Quarterly* 168 (2001): 910–29.

71. "S'pore Draws More Chinese Investments", *Straits Times*, 1 March 2002, p. S12. On China's investments in Southeast Asia, see "Buying into Southeast Asia", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 March 2002, pp. 30–33. Southeast Asia accounted for only 6.1 per cent of China's FDI in 1999.

72. "S'pore as Partner in the Sino-Indian Trade Story", *Business Times* (Singapore), 15 April 2002.

73. Prime Minister Goh expressed his concern over this blasé attitude towards China in his 2001 National Day Rally. See also "A Wake-Up Call from China", *Sunday Times*, 22 July 2001, p. P4 and the letters in response, which drew the Prime Minister's attention.

74. "Govt to Find Ways to Enter China Market", *Straits Times,* 26 July 2001, p. 3.

75. The Singapore government will sponsor up to 100 students annually for MBA and business-related postgraduate studies in the best universities in China, India, and other Asian countries. After graduation, these Asia Business Fellows will be required to serve Singapore-based enterprises in their internationalization drive.

76. From the description of Network China on International Enterprise Singapore's website <http://www.ventureabroad.org.sg/index.jsp?vert=VA&secfield=4&catfield=52> (accessed 16 September 2003).

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77. The network is likely to be expanded to cover Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Yunnan provinces, and the Chongqing municipality.
78. The WCEC has been holding seven biennial meetings since 1991, the most recent in July 2003 in Malaysia. The eighth meeting is scheduled to be in Seoul, South Korea. The WCEC website is at <http://www.wcbn.com.sg/>.
79. The WCBN is a "comprehensive online business information network linking ethnic Chinese enterprises and executives all over the world. The bilingual online networking website provides data on Chinese enterprises and corporations in over 106 countries and regions. The idea for setting up WCBN first arose in 1993, when Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew suggested at the Second WCEC in Hong Kong that networking of ethnic Chinese businesses worldwide be made efficient by providing data on these businesses through the Internet". For more information, see http://wcbn.zaobao.com/orginfo/aboutwcbn_e.html (accessed 14 September 2003).
80. Liu Hong, "Old Linkages, New Networks: The Globalization of Overseas Chinese Voluntary Associations and Its Implications", *China Quarterly* 155 (1998): 582–609.
81. Speech by B.G. George Yeo, Minister for Trade and Industry, at the launch of Huayinet, 11 February 2000.
82. Huayinet is at <http://www.huayinet.org>.
83. The intricacies of Sino-Singapore political relations are beyond the scope of this paper. Excellent discussion can be found in Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000), especially pp. 108–12; and Khong Yuen Foong, "Singapore: A Time for Economic and Political Engagement", in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, edited by Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 109–28.
84. Tourist arrivals from China continue to grow, in percentage points, by double digits. In view of its receding ideological threat and to promote tourist arrivals from China, visa applications have been simplified and expedited: "Chinese Tourists to Singapore Will Get Their Visas Faster", *Straits Times*, 28 September 2001, p. A5; "Follow the Flags to Save Tourism", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 March 2002, pp. 22–25. See also "Direct Contacts with China Vital, says President", *Straits Times*, 15 September 2001, p. A3. Likewise, China-bound tours from Singapore are also gaining popularity.
85. "China, S'pore to Set Up High-Level Council", *Straits Times*, 27 April 2002, p. 1. The establishment of this mechanism was agreed upon during then Vice-President Hu Jintao's visit to Singapore *en route* to the United States in April 2002.

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86. Rosemary Foot, *Rights Beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle over Human Rights in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 153–57; Paul J. Bolt, *China and Southeast Asia's Ethnic Chinese: State and Diaspora in Contemporary Asia* (Westport, C.T: Praeger, 2000), pp. 143–49. See also Long Hua, "China Favours Singapore as Political Model", *Straits Times*, 6 July 2001, p. 21 (first published in *Hong Kong Economic Journal*).

87. Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 211.

88. About 200 of China's mayors and vice-mayors have participated in the programme to study Singapore's development experience: "Mayors' Study Visits Here to Continue", *Straits Times*, 27 April 2002, p. H3.

89. Robert Karniol, Interview with Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence of Singapore, *Jane's Defence Weekly* 35, no. 26 (27 June 2001), p. 32. On a state visit to China, Singapore President S.R. Nathan said that "Our defence people have exchanges with you. To what extent it can develop depends on the complementarity between our defence philosophy and yours [China's]": "Natural to Worry over China: President Nathan", *Straits Times*, 13 September 2001, p. A3. Singapore subscribes to the triangular balance of power equilibrium between China, Japan, and the United States in maintaining peace and stability in East Asia.

90. "Taiwan, China and S'pore", *Today* (Singapore), 23 April 2002, p. 3; "Wu Sneaks into Singapore", *Taipei Times* (online edition), 12 January 2001. Two Chinese navy warships made their first-ever port call to Singapore in May 2002. This should herald more visits by the Chinese navy: "China Warships' First Visit to S'pore", *Straits Times*, 18 May 2002, p. A2. On Sino-Singapore military ties, see Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 33–37.

91. "China will insist on a political role commensurate with its growing economic power": see Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), p. 114. On the myths, which can be accentuated to threats, surrounding relations between China and Southeast Asia and China and the Chinese overseas, see Wang Gungwu, *China and Southeast Asia: Myths, Threats and Culture* (Singapore: World Scientific and Singapore University Press, 1999); Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2000); and Zha Daojiong, "China and the May 1998 Riots of Indonesia: Exploring the Issues", *Pacific Review* 13, no. 4 (2000): 557–75. A key area of potential conflict between China and several Southeast Asian countries relates to the control of access and natural resources in the South China Sea: see also the collection of articles on this topic in *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 1 (2003).

92. See "Pupils Aren't Mixing, Study Finds", *Straits Times*, 26 July 2003, p. 1; "A

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Teammate? Pupils Pick Those of Same Race", *Straits Times*, 26 July 2003, pp. H2–H3.

93. Ooi Giok Ling, Tan Ern Ser, and Soh Kay Cheng, "The Study of Ethnicity, National Identity and Sense of Rootedness in Singapore" (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, 2002).
94. See David Chan, *Survey on Social Attitudes of Singaporeans (SAS) 2001: Attitudes on Race and Religion* (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development and Sports, October 2002).
95. "S'pore's Blind Spot: Racial Harmony ... With No Real Interaction?" *Straits Times*, 30 September 2002, p. H1.
96. See Channelnewsasia report, "River Hongbao Next Year May Feature Stalls from Other Ethnic Groups", 28 October 2002; "Malay MPs and SCCCI Members to Meet Regularly to Correct Misperceptions", 29 October 2002; "Chinese Community Grapples with Muslim Issues", *Straits Times*, 21 October 2002, p. 12.
97. "An Uphill Climb for Chinese Language", *Straits Times*, 12 October 2002, p. H20.
98. The government's position is that race relations have improved since after the September 11 attacks in the United States: see "Races Not Far Apart, Poll Shows", *Straits Times*, 20 February 2002, p. 1; "Races More Close-Knit After 9-11", *Straits Times*, 21 March 2003, p. H9. However, the parliamentary debate in March 2003 on the White Paper on the Jemaah Islamiah arrests revealed the unease as the debate ironically centred on race relations rather than on terrorism.
99. "Don't Put Us on the Defensive Again: Muslims", *Straits Times*, 18 September 2002, p. H4. As a consequence, the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), Singapore Business Federation (SBF), and National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) jointly issued a Code of Responsible Employment Practices in December 2002.
100. See further my discussion in "'We, the Citizens of Singapore': Multiethnicity, Its Evolution and Its Aberrations", in *Beyond Rituals and Riots: Ethnic Pluralism and Social Cohesion in Singapore,* edited by Lai Ah Eng (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004). See also the letter by the President of MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, or Islamic Religious Council of Singapore), "Muslim Community Will Change at Its Own Pace", *Straits Times*, 4 September 2000, p. 18.
101. One manifestation is the People's Association's new logo with the circles, representing the four ethnic groups, being more fluid rather than definitive (as it was with the old logo). An extract from the rationale of the new logo reads: "Different communities, represented by the circles, keep their distinct identities and cultural values while moving and interacting with one another in the common space. Our vision is one of all communities bonding closely together, increasing the common space and strengthening the nation." <http://www.pa.gov.sg/aboutpa/palogo.htm> (accessed 20 November 2002).

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102. Wang Gungwu, "The Chinese as Immigrants and Settlers", in *Management of Singapore's Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, edited by Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 562. Wang Gungwu's prescient advice of the imperative of Chinese-Singaporeans to continue to strengthen their bond with Southeast Asia even with an ascendant China is critical if nation-building in Singapore is to succeed.

103. On the centrality of race and ethnicity in Singapore, see David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66–111; John Clammer, *Race and State in Independent Singapore 1965–1990* (Hants: Ashgate, 1998); Raj K. Vasil, *Asianising Singapore: The PAP's Management of Ethnicity* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1995).

104. David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast* Asia (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 110.

105. Singapore would have attained a higher plane of nation-building if it can go beyond assuming that "repression is always necessary for maintaining peaceful ethnic relations and that situations of 'ethnic peace' are the ones that require explanation rather than those of ethnic discord, and, especially, violence": see Stephanie Lawson, "Sanitizing Ethnicity: The Creation of Singapore's Apolitical Culture", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 7, no. 1 (2001): 63–84 at 82.

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CHAPTER 9

Ethnic Relations in Singapore: Evidence from Survey Data

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Ethnic division is not a thing of the past. Indeed, in the last decade alone, we witnessed numerous high-profile examples of the revival, resilience, or renaissance of ethnicity, ethno-nationalism, and racism in various parts of the globe (cf. Fenton 1999, p. 212). In itself, there is nothing essentialist about — or inherent in — race or ethnicity that produces social tension or conflict. However, ethnic inequality and racial prejudice, reinforced by ethnic segregation and racial discrimination, have been a source of racial conflict and, more generally, social instability.

In the Singapore context, the stock solution to promoting racial harmony has always been to encourage inter-ethnic interactions and integration, whether in the housing estates, in schools, or at the workplace, as well as to promote ethnic equality and supra-ethnic co-operation, solidarity and identity in and through the nation-building project. The latter presumes that the various ethnic groups can imagine a future together as "One People, One Nation, One Singapore" against a backdrop of cultural diversity (cf. Rex 1996, p. 148).

Singapore has had its share of ethnic conflict in the sixties and before. The ethnic dimension has not in any way receded into the background or faded away. Indeed, it still figures prominently in public policies and

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public discourse, sometimes in response to political developments in the region or events in other parts of our ever-shrinking world. One perennial question is the extent to which Singapore has achieved ethnic integration, thereby resulting in a blurring of ethnic boundaries, rendering it less of an issue in matters relating to housing, education, employment, business, and politics. Another important question is whether ethnicity remains a weak spot vulnerable to influences emanating from outside Singapore.

It is against this backdrop and in terms of Singapore's nation-building and multiracial vision and effort that various studies have been commissioned over the years to gauge and monitor the extent of ethnic integration in Singapore. A study by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) released in 1990 reported that, in terms of several indicators — neighbourly interactions, friendship ties, and colleague preference — the ethnic relations situation has witnessed vast improvements since the 1960s. But improvements, manifested in racial harmony, does not mean that ethnicity matters very little. A *Straits Times* survey conducted in 2000 reported that "most Singaporeans believe that race relations is better today than 10 years ago, but fewer than one in two will bet their lives on these ties if there is a crisis" (*Straits Times*, 4 March 2000).

While this has come as somewhat of a disappointment to those who expect more of Singapore's nation-building efforts over the last thirty-five years, one could argue that given Singapore's status as a young nation, which is only one-generation old, it is doing very well with regard to ethnic relations. Undoubtedly, it takes time, serious effort, and an acceptable institutional framework to build up trust and acceptance, as opposed to mere tolerance, which has a rather fragile quality. Nevertheless, what can be observed in terms of various measures to enhance ethnic integration has been encouraging, although this is hardly a reason to become less vigilant, which suggests that there is a need to feel the pulse of ethnic relations in Singapore and gauge its social health on a regular basis.

In the recent IPS 2001 study on ethnicity and national identity,[1] there were three main items on ethnic relations, as perceived and experienced at the ground level. These items pertain to choice of marriage partners, choice of neighbours, and cross-ethnic social ties and activities.

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The respondents were also asked to indicate what they thought of the major ethnic categories: Chinese, Indian, and Malay. The responses to the list of characteristics provide a sense of how people in the various ethnic categories view one another, be it positive or negative. The literature terms such perceived characteristics as ethnic stereotypes, which in turn reflect ethnic prejudice and are likely to have important implications for ethnic relations at the workplace, schools, and in the neighbourhoods.

Indicators of Cross-Ethnic Ties

Marriage Partners

For our analysis in this chapter, I have used a framework inspired by Borgardus's concept of "social distance" (Miller 1970, pp. 222–24). When translated into a scale, it measures the distance quotient, or strength of relationship, between social categories, including ethnic categories. On this scale, the item used to gauge the closest possible social distance between ethnic categories is "acceptance to close kinship by marriage".

Somewhat similarly, this study asked respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement "It is a bad idea for people of different races to marry one another". Overall, the data suggest that a majority (59 per cent) of Singaporeans would support the idea of inter-ethnic marriage, while another one in four maintained a neutral stand (Table 9.1).

Our analysis in terms of ethnicity indicates that 68 per cent of Malays,

Table 9.1
"It Is a Bad Idea for People of Different Races to Marry One Another", by Ethnicity, 2001
(In percentages)

	All	Chinese	Malay	Indian
Agree	16	17	14	25
Neutral	25	28	17	21
Disagree	59	55	68	54
	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square = 36.916, df = 4, p = 0.001 significant.

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Table 9.2
"It Is a Bad Idea for People of Different Races to Marry One Another", by Age, 2001 (In percentages)

	All Ages	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64
Agree	16	10	13	16	19	30
Neutral	25	25	25	25	25	28
Disagree	59	66	62	59	56	42
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square (collapsed table) = 30.654, df = 4, p = 0.001 significant.

55 per cent of Chinese, and 54 per cent of Indians were supportive of inter-ethnic marriage. The comparative data for the 1990 IPS study were between 45 and 50 per cent for the Chinese, between 58 and 63 per cent for the Malays, and between 55 and 58 per cent for the Indians.[2] The data suggest some small overall strengthening of positive ethnic relations, a condition that Singaporeans have come to expect and is borne out by the absence of ethnic conflict, if not the presence of ethnic integration.

When analysed in terms of age, our data suggest that younger people are likely to be more accepting of inter-ethnic marriage (Table 9.2). This probably reflects the larger extent of inter-ethnic mixing among younger Singaporeans at school and in the neighbourhood. Specifically, while 66 per cent of Singaporeans between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four support inter-ethnic marriage, the figure for those aged fifty-five to sixty-four is 42 per cent.

Given that younger Singaporeans are also likely to have higher educational attainment, it should not surprise us that the more highly educated Singaporeans are more accepting of inter-ethnic marriage than their counterparts with a lower level of education (Table 9.3): 74 per cent of university graduates as compared with 41 per cent of primary school leavers. This finding resonates with the sociological literature, namely, that the extent of social liberalism, as reflected in ethnic tolerance, rises with educational attainment (Rempel and Clark 1997, p. 21).

Neighbours

Of a lower order than marriage in the measurement of social distance is that of neighbourly relations. A measure of the acceptance of inter-ethnic

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Table 9.3
"It Is a Bad Idea for People of Different Races to Marry One Another", by Education, 2001 (In percentages)

	All Levels	Primary	Some Secondary	"O" Level	"A" Level/ Diploma	Degree
Agree	16	24	16	13	15	12
Neutral	25	35	25	22	28	14
Disagree	59	41	59	64	58	74
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square (collapsed table) = 62.461, df = 6, p = 0.001 significant.

neighbourly relations provides an indication of the preferred extent of ethnic segregation/desegregation. It is expected that the extent of agreement with an item on inter-ethnic neighbourly relations will likely be higher than that of inter-ethnic marriage, since the former is less intimate than the latter type of ties.

Indeed, the proportion indicating agreement with the statement "I support having people from different racial groups living in Singapore" moved up from 59 per cent, for the inter-ethnic marriage item, to 80 per cent overall, even 88 per cent for the Malays, though only 78 per cent for the Chinese. These proportions suggest that a large majority of Singaporeans, cutting across ethnic lines, are supportive of multiracial neighbourhoods (Table 9.4). Clearly, having persons of another race living in the neighbourhood was more readily accepted than having or considering them as marriage partners or in-laws, which perhaps also explains why there is no statistically significant difference across the various age and educational categories on this item (Tables 9.5 and 9.6).

Apart from the above data, the most recent survey I conducted (with Chan)[3] in 2002 indicate that, when given a list of people, including "people of a different race", whom they "would not like to have as neighbours", about 95 per cent of Singaporeans did not even think of race as a factor in their choice of neighbours (Table 9.7). Moreover, there is no statistically significant difference between the four ethnic categories.

Cross-Ethnic Social Ties and Activities

The two items dealt with in the above sections refer to attitude rather than behaviour. While attitude provides some indication of the ethnic

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Table 9.4
"I Support Having People from Different Racial Groups Living in Singapore", by Ethnicity, 2001 (In percentages)

	All	Chinese	Malay	Indian
Agree	80	78	88	83
Neutral	15	17	9	14
Disagree	5	5	3	3
	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square = 22.049, df = 4, p = 0.001 significant.

Table 9.5
"I Support Having People from Different Racial Groups Living in Singapore", by Age, 2001 (In percentages)

	All Ages	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64
Agree	80	82	77	83	27	80
Neutral	15	12	18	14	18	15
Disagree	5	6	4	4	5	6
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square (collapsed table) = 3.538, df = 4, p = 0.472 ns.

Table 9.6
"I Support Having People from Different Racial Groups Living in Singapore", by Education, 2001 (In percentages)

	All Levels	Primary	Some Secondary	"O" Level	"A" Level/ Diploma	Degree
Agree	80	81	82	79	75	86
Neutral	15	14	13	16	21	11
Disagree	5	5	6	5	4	4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square (collapsed table) = 3.574, df = 6, p = 0.734 ns.

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Table 9.7
"You Would Not Like to Have People of a Different Race as Neighbours", by Ethnicity, 2002 (In percentages)

	Chinese	Malay	Indian	Others
Mentioned	4	5	10	7
Not mentioned	96	95	90	93
	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square = 6.568, df = 3, p = 0.087 ns.

relations situation in Singapore, it does not tell us the actual extent of cross-ethnic ties. An item used in this study to capture the behavioural aspect of ethnic relations is that of "invitation of friends, colleagues, or neighbours of another race to celebrate special occasions, such as birthdays, weddings or festivals".

Our data suggest that Malays and Indians are more likely than the Chinese to have invited friends or neighbours of a different race to attend important social events. This asymmetry is highly plausible given that minority members are more likely to meet majority members, while it is possible for majority members to have very little to do with minority members (Table 9.8). In short, relative demographic proportions do influence the extent of cross-ethnic social ties and activities.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons for optimism. When compared with the findings of the 1990 IPS report mentioned above, it can be observed that while the extent of cross-ethnic social activities has been fairly stable and high over the last decade for the Malays and Indians,

Table 9.8
"Invited Friends, Colleagues, or Neighbours of Another Race to Celebrate Special Occasions with Me", by Ethnicity, 1989 and 2001 (In percentages)

	All	Chinese		Malay		Indian	
	2001	2001	1989	2001	1989	2001	1989
Invited Chinese	96	99	77	*84*	*80*	73	73
Invited Malay	62	*51*	*30*	99	96	70	72
Invited Indian	52	*40*	*23*	70	69	97	86

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that for the Chinese has registered a fairly sharp increase, rising from 30 to 51 per cent in the area of invitations extended to Malay friends; and 23 to 40 per cent in the case of Indian friends.

Social Distance

While the above analyses deal with different types of ties — marriage partners, neighbours, and friends — separately, an IPS survey I conducted in 1999 asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they were "comfortable" with having a person of a different race in each of the following types of relationship: as a close friend, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, neighbour, teacher, doctor, member of Parliament, prime minister, and project team leader (Table 9.9).

Table 9.9 shows that, as in the findings reported earlier, the minorities tended to score higher than the majority race on every type of relationship. For instance, while the Chinese scored 3.46 on the "spouse" item, the Malays had a score of 3.75, and the Indians, 3.84. When asked about the degree to which they felt comfortable with a person of a different race as "prime minister", the Malays and Indians score 4.19 and 4.29 respectively, as compared with 3.93 for the Chinese.

Table 9.9
"How Comfortable Would You Feel With a ... Who Is Not of the Same Race as You", by Ethnicity, 1999 (Mean Score)

Relationship	Chinese	Malay	Indian	Others	Overall Mean
Close friend	4.06	4.21	4.30	4.31	4.10
Brother-in-law/sister-in-law	3.75	4.05	4.02	4.19	3.81
Boyfriend/girlfriend	3.51	3.73	3.87	4.14	3.57
Spouse	3.46	3.75	3.84	4.09	3.53
Neighbour	4.14	4.25	4.29	4.29	4.17
Teacher	4.16	4.25	4.30	4.29	4.18
Doctor	4.10	4.22	4.25	4.32	4.13
Member of Parliament	4.02	4.18	4.27	4.18	4.06
Prime minister	3.93	4.19	4.29	4.19	3.99
Project team leader	4.05	4.18	4.25	4.19	4.08

1 = Least comfortable.
5 = Most comfortable.

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Table 9.10
Relative Social Distance, by Ethnicity, 1999
(Ranking)

Relationship	Chinese	Malay
Teacher	1	1
Neighbour	2	1
Doctor	3	3
Close friend	4	4
Project team leader	5	6
Member of Parliament	6	6
Prime minister	7	5
Brother-in-law/sister-in-law	8	8
Boyfriend/girlfriend	9	10
Spouse	10	9

1 = Least social distance.
10 = Most social distance.

Apart from comparing the "degree of comfortableness" scores, another interesting dimension to examine is that of the pattern of relative social distance, derived by ranking the "degree of comfortableness" across different types of relationship. Table 9.10 shows that the pattern of relative social distance for the Chinese is quite similar to that of the Malays. Both ethnic categories are most comfortable with having a person of another race in such roles as "teachers" and "doctors", but they are less likely to feel comfortable with the idea of a person of another race as "close friend". The furthest social distance relates to the most intimate relationships, that of "spouse".

Presence of Ethnic Prejudice?

The chapter thus far suggests that the ethnic relations situation in Singapore is generally healthy. However, this does not necessarily imply the absence of ethnic prejudice. Indeed, the finding that one in four Singaporeans would "feel uneasy in places full of people who are not of the same race as them" indicates the presence of ethnic prejudice. The extent of "uneasiness" is higher among the Chinese than among the Malays or Indians (Table 9.11), probably another reflection of the asymmetry in majority-minority relations. Along the dimension of educational attainment, the extent of "uneasiness" rises as one moves down the educational ladder (Table 9.12).

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Table 9.11
"I Would Feel Uneasy in a Place Full of People Who Are Not the Same Race as Me", by Ethnicity, 2001
(In percentages)

	All	Chinese	Malay	Indian
Yes	28	29	22	24
Neither	20	23	15	23
No	52	48	63	53

Note: Chi-square = 23.00, df = 4, p = 0.001 significant.

Table 9.12
"I Would Feel Uneasy in a Place Full of People Who Are Not the Same Race as Me", by Education, 2001
(In percentages)

	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	University
Yes	39	27	22	23
Neither	17	19	29	19
No	44	54	50	57

Note: Chi-square = 29.415, df = 12, p = 0.003 significant.

Ethnic Identity and National Identity

Another important comparison pertains to ethnic identity and national identity. Table 9.13 shows that a higher proportion of Malays, relative to the Chinese and the Indians, identify themselves by their ethnic group first, and as Singaporean second. In contrast, more than half of the Indian sub-sample thought of themselves as Singaporean first, and "a member of some ethnic group" second. A plausible explanation for this pattern of ethnic identity and national identity is that, for the Chinese, being a majority may have rendered their ethnic identity less predominant in their consciousness, whereas for the Malays, being a sizeable minority in a Malay-dominated region, it has the opposite effect. The Indians, being a small minority characterized by intra-ethnic heterogeneity, may see no advantage in emphasizing their ethnic identity. This reinforces Chua and Kwok's (2001, p. 106) observation that "the Tamils (who constitute

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Table 9.13
Social Identity, by Ethnicity, 2002
(In percentages)

Social Identity	Chinese	Malay	Indian	Others
Above all, I am a Chinese Singaporean	*70*	0	0	0
Above all, I am a Malay Singaporean	0	*89*	0	0
Above all, I am an Indian Singaporean	0	0	*45*	0
Above all, I am _____ (other ethnic group not mentioned above)	0	0	2	62
I'm Singaporean first and a member of some ethnic group second	*30*	*11*	*53*	*39*
Total	100	100	100	100

Note: Ch-square: not meaningful due to empty cells.

the majority of Indians in Singapore) … prefer that multiracialism be abolished and a 'Singaporean' sense of nationhood developed in its place".

Implications

Survey Data or Anecdotal Data?

Given the positive findings reported in this chapter, there are obviously reasons for celebrations. After all, our tracking of the ethnic relations climate since 1969 indicates that cross-ethnic ties have indeed improved over the years. However, there are some commentators, like journalist M. Nirmala, who observed that "surveys show race relations in Singapore to be healthy, yet anecdotes abound that interaction between the races leaves much to be desired". I would concur with the journalist that if you "throw a stone … you will hit someone with an anecdote to tell of how relations are not as wonderful" (*Straits Times*, 16 November 2002).

The issue here is what should we believe in: the positive survey findings or the negative anecdotal data? My response to this question is that from the statistical approach, we tend to look at the "rule", rather than the "exception". Hypothetically, if 80 per cent of Singaporeans are interacting across ethnic lines, we can legitimately argue that we have at least one piece of evidence to support a claim of healthy ethnic relations situation in Singapore. However, there are still 20 per cent of

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Singaporeans who do not want to have anything to do with people of other races. In a population of about 3 million Singaporeans, this figure of 20 per cent amounts to 600,000 people or a magnitude of the populations of Ang Mo Kio, Bedok, and Tampines combined (Housing and Development Board 2000, p. 12). Hence, it is no wonder that negative anecdotal data abound, particularly if there is a multiplier effect associated with the circulation of anecdotes.

From a policy perspective, a 80 per cent positive figure would suggest that the ethnic relations formula used has been successful, though policy-makers may hope for even better results. Nevertheless, in some cases, policy-makers may do well to analyse the 20 per cent who are resistant to the government's efforts to promote racial harmony and integration. In the extreme case, for instance, even if 99.9 per cent of Singaporeans are supportive of Singapore's ethnic relations formula, and 0.1 per cent (or 3,000 people) are vehemently against the formula, there may still be a cause for concern if this 0.1 per cent become a fertile ground for recruitment by terrorist groups. The implication here is therefore not whether we should trust survey data or anecdotal evidence, but whether surveys can detect the presence of fringe or marginal groups who may cause disruptions to the healthy ethnic relations climate brought about through the support of a vast majority of Singaporeans.

Can We Render Ethnicity Irrelevant in Singapore?

Even as we take comfort in knowing that the ethnic relations situation is healthy, we may ask whether Singapore will eventually arrive at a point in which ethnicity is no longer relevant. Statistically speaking, we may project such an end point. However, given that ethnic identity, together with religious identity, is still rather strong in Singapore, particularly among the Malays, and assuming that multiculturalism continues to be promoted and practised, it is likely that ethnic boundaries will remain, rather than be dissolved, although this does not preclude a high degree of cross-ethnic ties. The happy ending may therefore not be one in which ethnicity is irrelevant, but one in which there is no conflict between the public domain of law, politics, and economics, on the one hand, and the private domain in which moral education, primary socialization, and the inculcation of religious belief take place, on the other hand (Rex 1996, p. 29).

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NOTES

1. This study was carried out in 2001 by Ooi Giok Ling, Tan Ern Ser, and Soh Kay Cheng for the Institute of Policy Studies.
2. The 1990 study cited was conducted by Chiew Seen Kong and Tan Ern Ser for the Institute of Policy Studies.
3. This survey is funded by the National University of Singapore (111-000-024-112), with additional funding provided by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports. It is affiliated to the *World Values Survey* led by Professor Ronald Inglehart, University of Michigan. The Singapore survey was conducted in 2002 by Tan Ern Ser and Angelique Chan, with Alexis Pereira.

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CHAPTER 10

An Outsider Looking In at Chinese Singaporeans

SHARON SIDDIQUE

The term "outsider" requires some explanation. I have lived in Singapore for almost thirty-five years, but I will always be an outsider to Chinese culture. For one thing, I am illiterate. When I pass banners in Chinatown on the way to my office, I wonder what they are announcing. Not reading Chinese means that Chinese newspapers, banners, street signs, and restaurant menus are undecipherable. Riding the MRT, I cannot eavesdrop on people's conversations if they are in Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, or Teochew. Although, after thirty-five years, I can at least tell the difference amongst them when they are spoken, and understand a bit of "market talk" (about vegetables and prices).

In some ways, it is presumptions to live in a society for thirty-five years without making an effort to acquire at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language spoken by the majority. But when one thinks about it, this is relatively easy to justify in the Singapore context, where there are four official languages, and English is certainly dominant in public discourse in the bureaucracy, and in interfacing with foreigners and members of other races. Besides, one can also rationalize that very few (I have not met one) Singaporeans are fluent in all four of these

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official languages (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English). I am fluent in two of them, Malay and English, which in multiracial Singapore gives me a passing score of 50 per cent.

Besides, I have many Chinese friends and acquaintances, even a Chinese sister-in-law. We have attended each other's weddings, nursed each other through pregnancies and baby-minding, celebrated Chinese New Year, and Hari Raya, and Christmas, gone on holidays, and shared coveted information about the best tuition teachers. I have learned to play mah-jong (badly). Of late we are attending the weddings of these children we have raised. Now we are collectively waiting for grandchildren. And, as is the way of life, we are also attending the funerals of our parents. How much of my Chinese friends' lives have I missed because I do not speak Chinese? Probably a great deal, but not in terms of friendship.

So I am an outsider looking in. The fact that my hair is now white, and I have been an observer for more than three decades, qualifies me to record my thoughts. The fact that I am a social scientist propels me to order these observations, and search for an appropriate methodological vehicle to convey them.

The noted anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, in his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Harper Collins, 1973), describes culture as "webs of significance". He sees the analysis of culture as an interpretive, rather than a normative, process. Geertz proposes a methodology of "thick description" to explain these "webs of significance". This "thick description" is not necessarily chronological. It is simply a term to acknowledge that culture is a complex, organic process, with myriad interfaces, levers, levels, and lens. From the vantage point of an outsider looking into Chinese Singaporean culture, and employing Geertz' "thick description", I propose to comment on what I perceive to be three cultural nodes — Nanyang University; the Speak Mandarin campaign, and Chinese New Year.

Cultural Nodes

Nanyang University

I was most impressed with my first visit to Nanyang University in 1968.

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Jurong was still mostly mangrove, and in those days, it was a long drive from the University of Singapore campus in Bukit Timah — where I was a student in the Malay Studies Department — to the arched entrance of Nantah. The distance was not only physical. I felt I was entering another world. For me, it was China, or what I imagined China to be. The large, solid, impressive buildings, the landscaped grounds, and the pervasive Chineseness of the place all contrasted with my experience on the English-speaking Bukit Timah campus, which was British colonial, and where English was the lingua franca for the Chinese-Malay-Indian student body.

There was a totally different atmosphere at the Nantah campus in the late 1960s. The Chinese students differed not only in the language that was the medium of instruction, but in the way they dressed, the way they interacted with teachers and fellow students. At the point I was not able to go beyond these superficial differences, but this was when I first became aware of the distinction between the "Chinese-educated" and the "English-educated".

This first visit to Nantah was also my introduction to the concept of the "Nanyang", the South Seas, the Chinese Overseas. Nanyang University connected a larger, regional, Chinese community. This identification with region came as a surprise, as I discovered that Nantah had a renowned Malay Studies Department. Later I learned to appreciate the fact that several of my Nantah graduate friends are remarkably trilingual — in Mandarin, Malay, and English.

Over the years, I have grappled with trying to understand the "Nantah spirit", and its resilience. This despite the fact that the university itself had a short history of twenty-seven years, from its founding in 1953 to its closure in 1980. The catalyst is important. The history of Chinese in Singapore is filled with great businessmen/philanthropists. Mr Tan Lark Sye, chairman of the Hokkien Huey Kuan, spearheaded the call by making a personal donation of S$5 million and 500 acres of land. Donations for the construction of the university came from Chinese of all walks of life, and in the turbulent post–World War II years, many sacrifices were made.

For me, Nanyang University was a window into the world of the "Great Tradition" of the Chinese literati, of the literate Chinese. My

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illiteracy, however, has regrettably condemned me to being a permanent outsider. But even as an outsider, the premium placed on language as a medium to access the great Chinese cultural traditions, is apparent. The "Nantah spirit" is now transmitted through an Internet portal, from a virtual world. But judging by the number of visitors to the site, it is certainly still alive.

Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year, in contrast, bursts with exuberant examples of the "little tradition" of Chinese folk heritage. If pondering the meaning of Nantah is a weighty business, Chinese New Year is pure fun. As an outsider one is continually learning that an oral folk tradition is full of collective wisdom punctuated by "I don't know why we do it but we do …" and "who told you that, I never heard that …", and "Ah yah, how can you give an old ten-dollar note, very bad …", and "Since you gave me two oranges I have to give you two …"

But for me the most dramatic moment of Chinese New Year comes before it begins. Chinese New Year eve is the only time when everything stops in Singapore. By 6 p.m. the streets are deserted. The bustling wet markets are devoid of people. All shops are shuttered. The remains of the last buying frenzies — bits of paper, cartons, crates with a few rejected mandarin oranges — are the only evidence of human habitation. Only we outsiders still wander the streets. Chinese Singaporeans have rushed home for the reunion dinner.

And then the feasting begins. And goes on for fifteen days. I have never really figured out the intricacies of Chinese New Year visiting patterns. I know it has something to do with hierarchy. Older relatives first; younger siblings visit older ones. Friends fit themselves in. Who can and cannot visit on which days still remains somewhat of a mystery to me. Some friends tell me that if I do not visit them on the first day, I cannot visit them on the third day because otherwise we will quarrel. The second day seems safe.

Then the issue of cross-ethnic visiting, which makes the whole thing more complicated. There is a debate amongst the Muslim community as to whether or not it is possible to consume food and drinks in Chinese homes. This stems from the fear of inadvertently eating something which

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contains pork, or which has come into contact with pork. *Bak kua*, the stable of Chinese New Year, is truly forbidden territory. But most cakes and nuts are not. For Hindus there are similar problems. But in Singapore cross-ethnic visiting on Chinese New Year is quite commonplace. It is left up to individuals to decide on what they feel comfortable with.

And then there are the *hong bao*, which used to be called *ang pow* when the Chinese dialects were widely used. The famous red packets were the delight of my children when they were growing up. Lots of lessons to be learned here as well. The contents (always money) must be an even number not an odd one. And the notes must be new. *Hong bao* are an interesting example of how a very Chinese Singaporean custom has been adopted by other communities. *Hong bao* have been incorporated into Hari Raya celebrations in the form of "green packets", usually decorated with a *ketupat* design. Muslim children now enjoy collecting them on their rounds of visiting relatives

And then the orange exchange ritual, which I have also yet to master. My oranges must be perfect. Preferably with stems and leaves. Last year, after thirty-four Chinese New Years, I still managed to commit an orange mistake. My sister-in-law scolded me for giving "iced" oranges, which I had taken out of the fridge before visiting. "How can you give cold oranges, lah. And when you give them, the tops must be facing up. How can after all these years you don't know?"

One of the most interesting things about Chinese New Year which I have been missing because of my inability to speak Chinese is the wonderful world of homonyms, which punctuate almost every plant, colour, and certainly every food item associated with Chinese New Year. My friends tell me I must eat this and that because it means wealth, or prosperity, or longevity, or good luck. What a rich and wonderful language, and how many meanings can be transmitted without the need for the written word. None of the other languages I know even comes close.

One Chinese tradition which has evolved with a group of my friends is meeting on the seventh Day of Chinese New Year to celebrate "everybody's birthday" or "the birthday of all human beings". Naturally we meet for lunch. And in the last few years, we have *yu sheng* — a dish of raw fish and shredded vegetables rich in homonyms. The ingredients

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come separated, and everyone digs in their chopsticks, tossing the ingredients high in the air for luck, and mixing them into a delicious concoction. How tasty, and how wonderfully symbolic.

In 1973 I witnessed the birth of a new Chinese Singaporean tradition — the Chingay Parade. In the first few years, it was a rather small affair, with jugglers, acrobats, dragon and lion dances, big-headed dolls, stilt walkers, and colourful floats. Under the sponsorship of the People's Association, it was then expanded to include non-Chinese, and Malay and Indian performing groups joined the parade.

In the 1980s its character changed. It was discovered by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB). The STB sponsored international groups, and aggressively promoted Chingay Singapore overseas, with extensive world-wide media coverage and viewership. Chingay was elevated into the ranks the world's best parades, alongside the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, the Rio Carnival, Mardi Gras, and the Nice Carnival. Chingay is a living example of how legends are created. (The Merlion is another one …)

The Speak Mandarin Campaign

If the celebration of Chinese New Year in Singapore is a generally spontaneous act of private life, the Singapore Speak Mandarin campaign is a calculated and sustained act of public life. The campaign, initiated in 1979, promotes the use of Mandarin amongst Chinese Singaporeans. It is not for outsiders. All aspects are organized by the Promote Mandarin Council, at the Ministry of Information and the Arts, and the offerings are relentless. For example, if you had dialled 1800-1122233 between 11 November 2002 to 10 December 2002 you were dialling into A Lesson a Day Mandarin series, where you can learn how to "translate" English idioms into Mandarin, for example, "as closed as an oyster", hit the nail on the head", and "stir up trouble".

In the late 1960s it was clear even to an ignorant outsider like myself that the Chinese community in Singapore spoke many languages. I remember when I discovered how serious was this "dialect divide". The mother of a friend was lamenting how her younger daughter was going to marry "outside", and how difficult it would be to adjust to an "outsider". It was only later in the conversation that I discovered that this Cantonese daughter had chosen a Hokkien-Baba for a husband. In

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those days, Malay was often the lingua franca, not only amongst people of different races who did not speak English, but also amongst the Chinese themselves, particularly to bridge dialect divides. Very few taxi drivers spoke English. Every taxi driver spoke Malay.

The Speak Mandarin campaign was initiated to change all that. Being illiterate in written Chinese means that it took me some time to grasp the fact that, irrespective of what dialect was being spoken, all Chinese could communicate through writing characters, which had the same meaning irrespective of which dialect it would be articulated in. I also learned that Mandarin was special. It was the language of the educated. Mandarin was the language of instruction in most Chinese schools in Singapore. For Chinese Singaporeans, "bilingualism" meant English and Mandarin.

When "bilingualism" became equated with English plus "mother tongue", the position of Mandarin as the "mother tongue " of Chinese Singaporeans was reinforced. This was in line with the "one race, one language, one mother tongue" approach to multiracialism that had evolved in the 1970s, and become entrenched in the 1980s. Malays had Malay, Indians had Tamil, and the Chinese had Mandarin.

So it was logical that, in the early years of the Speak Mandarin campaigns, the message to Chinese Singaporeans was "speak more Mandarin and less dialects". From 1979 to 1991, this message was carried to targeted groups and places. Groups included Chinese parents, hawkers, taxi drivers, and white-collar workers. Places included markets, food stalls, hawker centres, shopping centres, bus exchanges, and, of course, schools.

After 1991 the target audience shifted from dialect speakers to the English-educated. English-educated Chinese Singaporeans were urged to speak more Mandarin, and also to learn to express themselves fluently in Mandarin in their professional lives as well as their personal lives. For example, in 1998 Times Publishers released a series of handbooks on English-Chinese terms, which included:

- Common Business and Management Terms
- Common Internet and Computer Terms
- Names of Government Department Titles and Designations

Once the focus shifted to Mandarin for the English-educated, outsiders

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like myself were better able to appreciate what was going on, while, unfortunately, remaining ignorant of the language. For example, the series that appeared in the *Straits Times* on *Mr Kiasu Learns Mandarin* was quite hilarious.

In the early phase, the Speak Mandarin campaign was domestically driven, and targeted dialect speakers. In the later phase it has been externally driven, and targeted the English-educated. There seem to be two reasons for this shift. One is the obvious and continuing attempt to bridge what I have come to see as the "Nantah–University of Singapore" divide — the divide between the "Chinese-educated" and the "English educated". The second reason has to do with Singapore's sense of pragmatism. As China opened up, and Singapore saw a comparative advantage in expanding business linkages, Mandarin became a vital communication conduit, reinforcing Singapore's claim to be a "Gateway to China".

Webs of Significance

What can we generalize from these random observations, which are an attempt at constructing some of Geertz' "thick description"? If we remember that culture is interpretative, and that a study of culture consists of identifying and describing "webs of significance", then "thick description" should yield some insights into these webs. Here I would like to briefly isolate three that are critical to understanding Singapore culture: government involvement, Chinese identity markers, and multiracialism.

Government Involvement

Singapore has been described as a "nanny state" because of the extensive involvement of government in the lives of its citizens. Many social commentators have described and analysed Singapore's numerous social engineering projects. The three examples which I have addressed can be arranged on a scale of little government involvement to government-created. Certainly the Speak Mandarin campaign is a government creation that has impacted in myriad ways on the evolution of the Singaporean Chinese community.

Chinese New Year, on the other hand, is a largely spontaneous

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celebration to which the government has contributed very little. Much of it is "little tradition", handed down from generation to generation, unless one counts the Chingay Parade as a central ritual. But this may be premature. Nanyang University predates Singapore's independence, and even its self-government. But the merging of the two then existing tertiary institutions of Nantah and the University of Singapore into the National University of Singapore in 1980 was a government decision.

So the involvement of government in the evolution of cultural policies in Singapore is a critical web of significance. And it is interesting to note that an important common denominator running through the "thick description" concerns which languages are spoken when, why, and by whom.

Chinese Identity Markers

There are several insights into this second web of significance, which I have called "Chinese identity markers". Some are internal to Singapore markers. The promotion of Mandarin as a common language is one — particularly with reference to the need for a "common language" amongst Singapore's dialect speakers. Nanyang University represented a regional dimension of these identity markers. The university was a collective effort of the Nanyang Chinese to build a tertiary educational institution. In 1953, this Southeast Asian Chinese identity transcended the evolving nation-state boundaries. Singapore was the natural location because it was and is the only Chinese majority city-state in the Nanyang, and for that matter, in the world.

Finally, there is China. A China that looks set to be an increasing influence in the evolving Chinese Singaporean, and regional Chinese, identity. Mandarin has been promoted as the common language vehicle, and as a window into the Chinese literary "Great Tradition". And the opening of China has increased the interaction between Chinese overseas and the Chinese mainland. Thus Chinese identity has overlapping "webs of significance": national, regional, and with the homeland.

Multiracialism

And what can we learn about multiracialism? Two insights. First, Chinese Singaporeans have influenced other cultures. One small example is the

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transference of the tradition of giving *hong bao* (red packets) into the Muslim tradition of giving green packets. Certainly, the promotion of multiracialism in a state where the majority constitutes almost 80 per cent of the population is itself an important endorsement of diversity. Second, others have also influenced Chinese Singaporean culture. One wonders how much of the motivation for the Speak Mandarin campaign, and the need for Chinese Singaporeans to have a common language, was predicated on the "one race, one language" policy of English plus mother tongue.

One wonders also whether multiracialism in Singapore will ever end in a grand web of significance — a synthesizing concept. One such is already on the books. It remains to be seen whether it will stand the test of time, and be adopted as an integrating, overarching part of the emerging Singaporean cultural fabric. Five Shared Values were established as Singapore's National Ideology in a 1991 White Paper:

- Nation before community and society above self
- Family as the basic unit of society
- Regard and community support for the individual
- Consensus instead of contention
- Racial and religious harmony

Are they Chinese? Or Malay? Or Indian? I think they have the potential to be celebrated like the seventh day of Chinese New Year — everybody's birthday. With so much divisiveness in the world today, we need to celebrate values that promote our common humanity. In my thirty-five years as an outsider looking in, I have found a home in Singapore, and friends of all races. My life has been enriched, and I have been truly blessed.

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CHAPTER 11

Ethnic Chinese and Nation-Building: Concluding Remarks

LEO SURYADINATA

The revival of ethnicity and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European states at the end of the last century have redrawn public attention to ethnic relations and nation-building again. However, in multi-ethnic Southeast Asia where nations are still in the making, the problems of ethnicity and nation-building have never been out of sight. Many social scientists have been preoccupied with the problems of ethnic relations and nation-building. However, with intensive globalization and the revival of ethnicity, the problems become more salient than before. This book, which is a result of an international conference organized by the Singapore Society of Asian Studies, presents these issues from a Southeast Asian perspective.

Issues of the ethnic Chinese in ethnic relations and nation-building were the focus of the conference project. We invited scholars from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore to discuss these issues in their respective countries. We also invited Professor Wang Gungwu, a leading international scholar on ethnic Chinese history in the Southeast Asian region, to be the guest speaker, and he provided a frame of reference for the conference.

Not surprisingly, the book begins with the chapter by Professor Wang.

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Focusing on various major concepts used in this collection, he highlights the complex issues of ethnic/racial relations and the project of nation-building in the past and at present. Wang puts the issues in the context of globalization and liberalization, which has presented new challenges to nation-building in the Southeast Asian region. With multiculturalism being widely accepted in the world today, the concept of "nation" in Southeast Asia is being re-examined, so is the position of the ethnic Chinese in each nation in the region. The assimilation model of nation is no longer acceptable but Southeast Asian nationalism remains strong, posing constraints to ethnic Chinese identity and Chinese cultural revival.

It is generally agreed that "nation-states" in Southeast Asia are new and they are largely at the phase of nation-building. It is understandable that political élites in Southeast Asia have been eager to forge a nation based on existing states. They have attempted to integrate not only indigenous ethnic groups within their respective state boundaries, but also the so-called foreign minorities, particularly the ethnic Chinese, into the local society. Models of nation-states, however, differ from country to country. Indigenous states, namely countries dominated by a so-called indigenous group, tend to use a local ethnic group or groups as the basis of the new nation, while immigrant states prefer multi-ethnic nation-states excluding indiginism. Since indigenous states are based on indigenous models, they tend to expect foreign minorities such as the ethnic Chinese to be incorporated into the "indigenous" culture and society. Indonesia, for instance, during the thirty-two years of Soeharto's rule, had used this assimilation model to integrate the ethnic Chinese. The mono-indigenous culture was seen as the Indonesian national culture and ethnic Chinese were expected to be incorporated into it.

Indonesia

It is wrong to assume that the political élites in Indonesia used the assimilation model of Indonesian nation from the outset. In fact, before Soeharto came to power, several models of nation had been proposed. The earliest model proposed by Soekarno was based on the Western concept, and not based on race and ethnicity. Dr Mely Tan in her chapter discusses the nation-building process in the Indonesian archipelagos from pre–World War II to the present. She documents the participation of

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the Indonesian Chinese in the nation-building process, beginning with pre-war social and political organizations such as Partai Tionghoa Indonesia and its leader Liem Koen Hian, to the participation of ethnic Chinese leaders in the Preparatory Committee for Indonesia's independence. She also discusses a major ethnic Chinese organization after Indonesia's independence, Baperki, which favoured political integration rather than cultural and physical integration as proposed by its rival, the LPKB (Lembaga Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa).

Tan does not stop there but continues to examine developments after the fall of Soeharto, which show that ethnic Chinese participation in Indonesian nation-building has never ceased. In addition, she points out that the May 1998 riots prior to the downfall of Soeharto had anti-Chinese characteristics, although the riots were engineered. The end of the New Order, gave rise to multiculturalism in Indonesia, offering the ethnic Chinese a chance to claim a place in the Indonesian nation and society. While there was a revival of ethnic Chinese (dominated) social organizations such as the Perhimpunan Keturunan Tionghoa Indonesia (INTI) and Paguyuban Marga Sosial Tionghoa Indonesia (PMSTI), and political parties such as the Partai Reformasi Tionghoa Indonesia (PARTI), Chinese Indonesians continued to adjust to the challenge of Indonesian nationalism. She finally notes that although Soeharto's oppression of ethnic Chinese culture no longer prevails, and multiculturalism is in favour, "the road ahead is still full of sharp turns and stones blocking the way". Economic disparity and ethnic prejudices still remain, contributing to possible conflicts in the future.

There is no doubt that the May 1998 riot is a major event in Indonesian inter-ethnic relationship. A Dahana in his article labels this tragedy as "the worst ever in the history of inter-racial relationships between *pribumi* [indigene] and non-*pribumi* [non-indigene]". Anti-Chinese riots, in fact, originate prior to Indonesia's independence and have their historical roots. Nevertheless, the socio-economic and political factors appear to be dominant. Dahana examines the factors behind the May riots and discovers that prejudices and stereotypes held by the indigenous populations towards the ethnic Chinese had played a role. However, economic disparity and social inequity are the underlying factors that are often used by irresponsible indigenous leaders to achieve their political objectives.

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Even after the fall of Soeharto, the above factors continued to be present, making the situation in Indonesia precarious. Dahana offers the examples of prejudice and bizarre thinking of the indigenous Indonesians regarding the Chinese communities. One of the examples is the case of Acun Somabrata alias Sie You Le, a small businessman in Garut who made a living selling medicine in a small shop. But he also used his shop to run illegal banking services, accepting monthly deposits at an interest rate of 10 per cent per month! Acun later built up a debt of 4.2 billion rupiah and was unable to pay up. His two hundred clients were mainly indigenous Indonesians and this created ethnic tension. The municipal authorities asked the Garut Chinese to a meeting to discuss the debt incurred by Acun and the Regent of Garut asked the Chinese in Garut to pay the clients on behalf of Acun. The ethnic Chinese protested, arguing that Acun should be held responsible for his behaviour, not the Chinese community as a whole! The affair drew the attention of the press and it was only later that the authorities backed down: Acun was asked to be responsible for his own debts! Dahana also points out that in the eyes of the Indonesian *pribumi* population, the ethnic Chinese are non-indigenous as Indonesia is not their homeland, and therefore cannot be accepted as one of the *sukubangsa* or Indonesian regional ethnic groups. In the Indonesian concept, "foreign" ethnic groups can claim less rights than their indigenous counterparts.

This concept of indigenous and non-indigenous population in Indonesia is a colonial legacy. The Dutch colonial power ruled Indonesia based on ethnic/racial division, and justified racial discrimination on grounds of social and economic order. This concept has also been the basis of the Indonesian laws. Indonesia, after having achieved independence, inherited Dutch laws, hence racial discrimination.

Frans Winarta argues that after the fall of Soeharto, there are still more than sixty laws and regulations that contain racial discrimination. One or two have been either abolished or modified but the rest continue to apply. One law, for instance, the SBKRI (Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia, or letter proving Indonesian citizenship) had been repealed in 1996, two years before fall of Soeharto, but in practice the law is still enforced. Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent would not be able to get a passport and other relevant official documents without

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first getting the SBKRI. The SBKRI has been used by the indigenous bureaucrats as a source of revenue. Racial discrimination, Winarta maintains, is against basic human rights and harmful to national unity and nation-building. He appeals to the Chinese to participate in politics at all levels, especially to win over high political and bureaucratic positions in order to abrogate these discriminatory laws. He also points out that it is only through the democratic political system that this goal could be achieved so that Chinese Indonesians could be accepted as genuine members of the Indonesian nation.

Malaysia

Indiginism has been the cornerstone of the Malaysian government's ethnic policy. This has also created some problems in ethnic relations in a country that comprises three major "racial" groups. The concept of the Malaysian nation has not been free from this bias. In 1991, Mahathir proposed the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* without clearly defining it. Nevertheless, he seemed to want to integrate various ethnic/racial groups, especially with regard to education. While maintaining separate school systems, he suggested the change of medium of instruction for science and mathematics in all primary schools from "vernacular" languages to English. Malay- and Chinese-medium schools showed their reluctance, if not resistance, to the idea.

Lee Kam Hing in his article discusses recent developments in ethnic relations and nation-building in Malaysia. He notes that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government is aware that there is ethnic polarization in Malaysia, the Malaysians are not mixing, at schools and in universities different "races" keep to their own ethnic groups. This ethnic/racial rather than national consciousness has been reflected in a number of cases, including politics during the 1999 election, the issue of *Suqiu* (by the Malaysian Chinese Organizations' Election Appeal Committee), the debate on the Islamic state, and the use of the English language in schools and universities.

It appears that Malaysian Chinese voters did not support the "Barisan Alternatif" (BA), which was "multi-ethnic" but had strong Malay and Islamic flavour. They favoured the race-based Barisan

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Nasional (BN), which is the ruling coalition party. In the wake of the election victory, the *Suqiu* group appealed to the government for a review of present economic and political arrangements in Malaysia. Both the government and Malay organizations responded negatively towards the Chinese community. On the issue of an Islamic state, the Chinese community expressed their fear and were critical of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), which was seen to be associated with the Islamic Party (PAS), which favours the establishment of an Islamic state in Malaysia. The introduction of English as the medium of instruction in science and mathematic classes in Chinese, Malay, and Indian schools met with opposition. But the strongest opposition came from Chinese-medium schools. They feared that all schools were to be converted to "Wawasan school" (Vision School), thus ending "vernacular" school education. Nevertheless, the government has decided to suppress ethnic nationalism and continue to promote "Malaysian nationalism".

The issue of a Malaysian nation is also the theme of Shamsul's article. Like Lee Kam Hing, Shamsul also agrees that the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is vague and open to differing interpretations. However, unlike Lee Kam Hing, he discusses the concept at the theoretical level. He maintains that the Malaysian nation is a "nation-of-intent", which is a nation in the making. However, there are at least two types of definition: authority-defined and everyday-defined. These two definitions differ in content and are often in contestation.

Nevertheless, the definitions are further complicated by ethnic/racial divisions in Malaysia. Shamsul maintains that up to this moment, the nation-building process in Malaysia is still in progress. However, there have been tensions between the Malays and the Chinese — this is due to mutual "distance and distrust". There is no general agreement on the Malaysian nation. Some want to forge a homogeneous *Bangsa Malaysia* while others prefer a pluralistic Malaysian nation.

Even among the Malay nationalists, for instance, they were divided in their notions of Malaysian "nation-of-intent". "Some preferred *Melayu Raya* [greater Malay nation], others the Islamic state, and another group a united Malay *kerajaan* [kingdom]". There is contestation among these notions. Shamsul maintains that there is also internal contestation within

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the Chinese community regarding the "nation-of-intent", but he is of the view that there is healthy debate and this has been able to achieve what he calls "a state of stable tension" in Malaysia.

One interesting aspect of Shamsul's chapter is his personal experience, which has shaped his negative "collective memories" about the Chinese in Malaysia. These collective memories were later somewhat modified though they remain quite forceful. They have also been reinforced by a society based on ethnic/racial division.

P. Ramasamy sees the issue of nation-building in Malaysia from a Malaysian Indian perspective. He argues that ethnic Indians have been discriminated against by the Malay-dominated government. The so-called Malay dominance (or Malay hegemony), which favours the Malays, has been pursued at the expense of the Indians and other ethnic groups. In his own words:

> Malay hegemony under the present nation-building model means the following thing: Malay domination in the public sector, special privileges for Malays in the educational and economic realms, generous allocation of loans and scholarship for Malay students, special education programmes for Malays, the generous promotion of Malay culture and religion, and others …

He also notes that

> the recent declaration that Malaysia is an Islamic state has further complicated things for non-Malays and non-Muslims. Such a declaration not only questioned the multiracial and multi-religious aspects of the country, but also set in motion a myopic political process that tends to limit the cultural and religious space for non-Muslims.

He further argues that

> there is a growing feeling among non-Muslims that the present system does not serve to protect their genuine cultural and ethnic interests and that the nation-building project that once held such a promise might have gone astray to serve the narrow political interests of the Malay élite in UMNO.

To substantiate his points, Ramasamy offers examples regarding government policies towards the Indians and non-Muslims in the political, economic, and cultural fields. He highlights the Indian ownership of the national economy, which is 1.5 per cent, compared with about 25 per cent or more for the Malays and 40 per cent for the Chinese. This nation-

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building policy, he argues, victimizes the Indians and is detrimental to national unity.

Singapore

Singapore, the only immigrant state in Southeast Asia, is also multi-ethnic and multi-religious. But unlike the other Southeast Asian countries, ethnic Chinese constitute the majority of the population. Nevertheless, the government of Singapore is also concerned with nation-building and has adopted the policy of multiracialism, but this nation-building policy is not always consistent throughout the post-independence period. Eugene Tan in his chapter argues that there was a de-emphasis on Chinese identity during the first two decades of independence. However, driven in part by political and economic motives, the government has begun to increase emphasis on the return to one's cultural roots, thus heightening ethnic consciousness. This consciousness further leads to increased assertiveness in the promotion of ethnic indicators, posing a challenge to ethnic minorities.

Eugene Tan examines Singapore's nation-building policy with special reference to recent developments. He points out that the de-emphasis on Chineseness has given rise to de-culturalized Chinese Singaporeans. By the early 1980s, the government began to emphasize mother tongue education, hoping to "Asianize" Chinese Singaporeans who are considered by the authorities to have been too "Westernized". The state-defined mother tongue, in this case Mandarin, has been stressed by the government. The Speak Mandarin campaign was launched and later, Confucianism and other religious education were introduced, only to be abandoned when the government discovered the unintended consequance of ethnic and religious tensions. Eugene Tan maintains that the promotion of Chinese language, culture, and political values has continued, however, following the discovery of the state that it requires Chinese cultural élites to "provide the intellectual and cultural capital to drive the civilizational discourse in Singapore's nation-building efforts". The SAP (Special Assistance Plan) schools, catering mainly to Chinese students, were established, raising some disquiet among the non-Chinese.

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Singapore's "Asianization" policy also led to the introduction of ethnic-based self-help organizations. Eugene Tan maintains that Singapore society has become more ethnic-conscious, which is an unintended effect of the above policy. Gradually, the Chinese, as the majority group in Singapore, neglected to reach out to the minorities. Eugene Tan concludes:

> Nation-building entails the development and maturity of a Singaporean-Singapore identity which can help reduce the countervailing pulls of race, culture, and religion, which are stronger for the minority races than for the Chinese. … the ethnic Chinese must also be conscious of their role as the majority ethnic group and their commitment to sustainable and true multiracialism is as critical as it was in the fledgeling days of Singapore's nationhood.

Ethnic/racial relations in Singapore are often considered to be fragile. It has a recent history of racial/religious conflicts. However, since it achieved independence in 1965, with the exception of the 1967 minor riot, there has been racial harmony generally. Nevertheless, ethnic/racial tension occasionally occurs, and some researchers have conducted surveys from time to time to examine ethnic relations. Tan Ern Ser notes that the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), for instance, conducted a survey in 1990 to gauge ethnic/racial integration in Singapore. It reported that ethnic relations in terms of neighbourly interactions, friendship ties, and colleague preference witnessed vast improvements since the 1960s. But in 2000, a *Straits Times* survey found that "most Singaporeans believe that race relations is better today than 10 years ago, but fewer than one in two will bet their lives on these ties if there is a crisis". This shows that racial unity in Singapore has not been tested and ethnic loyalties are still strong.

The IPS in 2001 conducted another survey on ethnic relations in Singapore looking at inter-ethnic marriages, different racial groups living in Singapore, having people of other races as neighbours, and social distance. Tan Ern Ser, who was a member of the IPS team, reveals that different ethnic groups have different degrees of tolerance but generally, about 80 per cent of the respondents were positive. However, the survey only covers ethnic relations but not national identity. Most revealing were the 2002 survey results regarding "social identity by ethnicity" in

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Singapore. When asked whether the respondent considers himself/herself "Singaporean first and a member of some ethnic group second", the percentage of respondents who gave positive answers was generally low: they constitute 30 per cent (out of 100 per cent) of the Chinese, 11 per cent (out of 100 per cent) of the Malays, and 53 per cent (out of 100 per cent) of the Indians. This shows that the ethnic/racial feelings are still much stronger than national belonging.

The last article, by Sharon Siddique, is different from the rest in this collection as she blends her personal observation and the concept of Clifford Geertz regarding culture to present a picture of Chinese Singaporeans. Geertz describes culture as "webs of significance" and sees the analysis of culture as an interpretive rather than a normative process. According to Siddique, Geertz proposes a methodology of "thick description" to explain these "webs of significance". She selected three cultural nodes — Nanyang University, Speak Mandarin campaign, and Chinese New year — to present her understanding of Chinese Singaporean culture. After giving her "thick description" of these three cultural nodes, she links them to "government involvement, Chinese identity markers and multiculturalism", which, she argues, are the major characteristics of Singapore culture.

Siddique sees the Singapore government as pragmatic; Chinese Singaporeans are quite different from the Chinese in China; and multiracialism is being practised. For one thing, the government is promoting shared values which come from all major racial groups. Nevertheless, this Singapore culture is still in the making.

Concluding Remarks

With the exception of Singapore, Southeast Asian governments appear to have subscribed to indiginism, forging new nations based mainly on an indigenous model. Ethnic Chinese are expected to be integrated, if not assimilated, into indigenous society. However, with globalization and democratization, the assimilationist model is no longer acceptable, but indiginism appears to die hard. It often manifests itself in the form of indigenous nationalism or ethno-nationalism. Ethnic Chinese are still facing the challenge of indiginism.

As both concepts of ethnicity and race are better established, they

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are stronger than the new concept of nation. Understandably, ethnic/racial feelings are often stronger than national belonging. Ethnic tension in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Southeast Asia continues to exist, although its degree depends on the nature of nation-building policy in the respective country. A multi-ethnic and pluralistic nation is easier to build than an ethnic-nation which subscribes to assimilation rather than multiculturalism. Nevertheless, with globalization and democratization, multiculturalism has been accepted, giving ethnic Chinese an opportunity to re-examine their position in the nation-building process. Globalization and revival of Chinese ethnicity tend to challenge the old concept of ethno-nation and indigenous nation. They may also retard the process of national integration in Southeast Asia and beyond. These issues should be further explored.

Since nation-building is a long and difficult process, an immigrant state such as Singapore appears to have put more emphasis on citizenship than nationhood. For Indonesia and Malaysia, however, the nation-building project is in progress, but because of indiginism and economic and social disparity, tensions between different ethnic groups remain high.

The problems of ethnic Chinese and nation-building in Southeast Asia are still far from being resolved.

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Since nation-building is a long and difficult process, an immigrant state such as Singapore appears to have put more emphasis on citizenship than nationhood. For Indonesia and Malaysia, however, the nation-building project is in progress, but because of indiginism and economic and social disparity, tensions between different ethnic groups remain high.

The problems of ethnic Chinese and nation-building in Southeast Asia are still far from being resolved.

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